

MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE®

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I WHO CARES? AND WHY DON'T WE?

PREFACE

A NATION'S CULTURE IS NEVER A STATIC ELEMENT, A KNOWN QUANTITY OR A FIXED EQUATION, AND IT MUST BE APPROACHED WITH THIS IN MIND. THERE ARE ALSO OTHER WARNING SIGNALS THAT DEMAND OUR ATTENTION, MOST NOTABLY THE MANY DEFINITIONS AND PRESENT MEANINGS OF "CULTURE" IN OUR LANGUAGE.

THERE IS THE BROAD, OVERARCHING USE AS IN OUR "NATIONAL CULTURE" WHICH IS A CATCH-ALL PHRASE — TOO GENERAL TO BE ACCURATE, BUT WHICH SAVES TIME AND AVOIDS THE NEED TO COMMENT OR INQUIRE VERY FAR BELOW THE SURFACE LEVEL. ANY "NATIONAL CULTURE" CONSISTS OF A COLLECTION OF SUB-CULTURES ALL OF WHICH CARRY THE TITLE "CULTURE" WITH THE SAME AUTHORITY AS A NATIONAL CULTURE. WE CAN HAVE IN VARYING DEGREES A PEACE CULTURE, A POLITICAL CULTURE, AN ARTISTIC CULTURE, A CULTURE OF CONQUEST OR TRIBAL, ETHNIC OR RELIGIOUS CULTURES. THE WORD "CULTURE" HAS MULTIPLE MEANINGS WHICH OUR LANGUAGE CAN DISTINGUISH BY DEFINITION AND PRECISE EXAMPLE, BUT WHICH OUR COMMON USAGE TENDS TO DISREGARD.

IN DEALING WITH "CULTURE" WE ARE ALWAYS PRESENTED WITH THE DIFFERENT SHADES OF MEANING FOR THE SAME WORD WHICH HAUNT ALL LANGUAGES AND, ESPECIALLY, ENGLISH, THE GLOBAL LANGUAGE OF OUR ERA. FOR INSTANCE, IN THE LAST LINE OF THE ABOVE PARAGRAPH "COMMON" COULD BE READ AS MEANING "BROAD" OR "SHARED". SIMILARLY, OUR TITLE QUESTION "WHO CARES?" CAN BE READ WITH THE EMPHASIS EITHER ON "WHO" OR ON "CARES". IN EACH WAY THERE IS A SLIGHT, BUT NOTICEABLE, DIFFERENCE IN EXPRESSION AND MEANING.

OUR DICTIONARY¹ LISTS 12 MEANINGS FOR "CULTURE" INCLUDING TWO RELATIVE TO THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND BIOLOGY. MOST PEOPLE WHO USE "CULTURE", OR OTHER MULTIPLE MEANING WORDS, DO NOT BOTHER TO IDENTIFY THEIR INTENDED USAGE, ASSUMING THAT THE PERSON(S) BEING ADDRESSED WILL MAKE THE MENTAL ADJUSTMENTS NECESSARY TO COME UP WITH THE PROPER MEANING. GENERALLY SPEAKING, LANGUAGE DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY AND WE DON'T EITHER. CULTURE, WITH ALL ITS SHADES AND GRADES, LENDS ITSELF TO CONFUSION UNLESS WE PAY ATTENTION. WITH THAT IN MIND, WE WILL TRY TO MAKE SOME SENSE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY CHANGES AND OUTRIGHT CONTRADICTIONS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN AMERICAN CULTURE, MOSTLY IN THE LAST CENTURY.

IN THIS ISSUE, WE BEGIN A NEW SERIES WHICH WILL EXPLORE OUR NATION'S GROWING SEPARATION FROM ITS HISTORIC CULTURE AND THE REASONS BEHIND IT.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE, WE WILL CONTINUE TO COMMENT ON OUR PRESENT CULTURAL PATH WITH EMPHASIS ON OUR CHANGED AND CHALLENGED POLITICAL CULTURE.

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IN THE LARGER SENSE OF OUR AMERICAN CULTURE WE INCLUDE SUCH PARTICULAR CULTURES AS THOSE THAT REFER TO OUR HISTORY, RELIGION, EDUCATION, TRADE, MILITARY, IMMIGRATION, PICTORIAL AND PERFORMING ARTS, LITERATURE, MUSIC, TECHNOLOGY, RACE, VIOLENCE, INDUSTRY, COMMERCE, SPORT, GOVERNMENT, WEALTH, FREEDOM AND MORE. THESE EXIST AND CARRY ON — SIDE BY SIDE, SIMULTANEOUSLY AND FREQUENTLY IN DETERMINED CONFRONTATION.

THE ENDURING CONTRADICTION OF AMERICAN CULTURE IS THAT TO A DEGREE GENERALLY GREATER THAN ELSEWHERE MATTERS AS DIFFERENT AS SPORT, ETHNICITY OR RELIGION, FOR EXAMPLE, MAY CARRY THE WEIGHT OF CULTURE FOR SOME AND SEEM ONLY A MINOR DISTRACTION, AT BEST, FOR OTHERS.

STILL, IF WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND HOW THESE CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND FORCES EXERT THEMSELVES IN OUR NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL LIVES, WE MUST UNDERSTAND THREE UNDERLYING CHARACTERISTICS COMMON TO ALL OF THEM. THEY ARE MATTERS OF IDENTITY, AND OF CONSCIENCE, AND THEY ARE ALL SUBJECT TO HUMAN CONTROL. THE DEGREE TO WHICH OUR NATIONAL CULTURE IS AWASH IN CONFUSION AND DISAGREEMENT IS THE MEASURE OF OUR SOCIETY'S FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE AND ACT UPON THESE THREE PRINCIPLES.

EQUALLY IMPORTANT, CULTURE AS A DEFINING FORCE IN OUR SOCIETY IS NOT EXPRESSED WITH THE SCIENTIFIC PRECISION UPON WHICH SO MUCH OF OUR TECHNOLOGICAL AGE IS BASED. CULTURE'S MOVEMENTS AND INFLUENCES ARE MORE CIRCUITOUS AND CAN EVEN APPEAR TO BE RANDOM, MAKING PATTERNS THAT DON'T APPLY TO X-Y GRAPHS. SOME WILL FIND ADVANTAGE IN THIS AND TAKE REFUGE IN BROAD GENERALITIES OR FLAWED CONCLUSIONS, BUT SUCH FLIGHT AVOIDS THE DEMANDS OF A SUCCESSFUL SOCIETY.

IN CONSIDERING OUR AMERICAN CULTURE WE ARE FORTUNATE THAT IT SPANS ONLY FOUR HUNDRED YEARS AND STARTED FROM A CLEAN BASE PROTECTED BY AN ABUNDANCE OF NATURAL BENEFITS AND HOME TO SPARSE AND RELATIVELY LITTLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, WHEREAS IN THE SAME TIME FRAME IN EUROPE, ASIA AND THE NEAR EAST (NE) CULTURAL FORCES AND HISTORY COULD EXTEND BACK CENTURIES IN WHICH LANGUAGES, STRUCTURES, FAITHS AND HEREDITY WERE CAUSES OF CONSTANT CONFLICT; AND CITIES, BUILDINGS AND SOCIETIES WERE DISPOSED OF BY CONQUEST AND THEN RECYCLED BY NEW CONSTRUCTION AT THE SAME SITES.

STILL, AMERICAN CULTURE MUST HAVE A

STARTING POINT WHICH WE DESIGNATE AS 1620 WHEN THE PILGRIMS LANDED AT PLYMOUTH ROCK IN MA. IT IS TRUE THAT THE PILGRIMS' CULTURE WAS PREDOMINANTLY ENGLISH, BUT, ONCE THEIR FATEFUL VOYAGE ENDED AND THEY SET FOOT IN THE NEW WORLD, THEIR CULTURE WAS FOREVER CHANGED. ITS FUTURE WOULD BE DETERMINED BY AND ON THE NEW HOMELAND. UNBEKNOWNST TO THE PILGRIMS, THEIR ENGLISH CULTURE REMAINED ON THE MAYFLOWER AND AMERICA'S BEGAN WHEN THEY WADED ASHORE.

OTHERS HAD COME TO THE AMERICAN CONTINENT BEFORE — VIKINGS WHO SOMEHOW MANAGED TO BUILD AND INHABIT SETTLEMENTS IN NEWFOUNDLAND, THE FRENCH AND ENGLISH FUR TRAPPERS WHO WORKED OUR NORTHERN WILDERNESS AND THE SPANISH CONQUISTADORS WHO EXPLORED OUR SOUTHWEST. ALL OF THESE WERE ITINERANT EFFORTS — IN SEARCH OF NATURAL RESOURCES SUCH AS FISH, FURS OR GOLD.

AND THERE WAS THE 1607 ENGLISH COMMUNITY IN JAMESTOWN, VA WHICH IS CALLED THE OLDEST "PERMANENT" SETTLEMENT IN AMERICA. IT WAS "PERMANENT" IN THE SENSE THAT ITS FOUNDERS ESTABLISHED RESIDENCE THERE AND SURVIVED FOR A WHILE, BUT IT DIED — A VICTIM OF INDIAN WARS, CROP FAILURE AND STARVATION. THE OLDEST, PERMANENT ENGLISH PRESENCE IN THE NEW WORLD THAT ENDURED WAS THE ONE FOUNDED BY THE PILGRIMS IN PLYMOUTH ON THE EASTERN SHORE OF MA AND THE WESTERN EDGE OF CAPE COD BAY.

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FROM THE HUMBLE BEGINNINGS IN PLYMOUTH SOME FORCES AND TRADITIONS PROVIDED DIRECTION AND STABILITY TO AMERICA'S NASCENT CULTURE. UNLIKE THE CONTINENT'S PRISTINE NATURAL STATE, HOWEVER, THE NEW ARRIVALS CAME EQUIPPED WITH SOME CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS — THE LAW, LANGUAGE, RELIGION, COMMUNITY AND TRADE OF THEIR NATIVE ENGLAND. THE PICTURES OF THE PILGRIMS IN THEIR STIFF WHITE COLLARS AND TALL BLACK HATS GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF CARDBOARD CUT-OUTS, BUT THEY WERE OUR FIRST VENTURE CAPITALISTS AND, ARGUABLY FROM WHAT CAME AFTER THEM, PERHAPS OUR MOST SUCCESSFUL.

NO UNDERSTANDING OF AMERICAN CULTURE IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT RECOGNIZING THE INITIAL IMPETUS OF THE PILGRIMS DURING OUR FIRST, COLONIAL CENTURY. THIS LEADS TO CONFRONTING ONE OF OUR MOST FREQUENTLY REPEATED POLITICAL DISTORTIONS, THAT "WE ARE A NATION

OF IMMIGRANTS”, AS A REFERENCE TO THE PILGRIMS’ ARRIVAL IN NEW ENGLAND.

NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH! THE PILGRIMS WERE NOT IMMIGRANTS. THEY DID NOT ARRIVE AS REFUGEES SEEKING HOUSING, JOBS, EDUCATION, MONEY, MEDICAL CARE OR ANY OF THE OTHER BENEFITS THAT EITHER WHOLLY, OR PARTIALLY, IMMIGRANTS HAVE SOUGHT HERE AND ELSEWHERE. IT’S TRUE THAT THE PILGRIMS WERE FLEEING THE VICIOUS PROTESTANT-CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS WARFARE IN ENGLAND THAT GRIPPED EUROPE IN THE WAKE OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION, BUT THEIR PROCESS WAS THOROUGH AND WELL PLANNED IN ADVANCE.

WHOLE PARISHES AND VILLAGES COMBINED THEIR RESOURCES TO BUILD OR BUY SHIPS; HOMES AND EVEN CHURCHES WERE SOLD; AND, ONCE COMMUNITIES WERE ESTABLISHED, SHIPS WOULD RETURN TO BRING THOSE WHO BY CHOICE OR NECESSITY HAD STAYED BACK UNTIL THEY COULD BE ACCOMMODATED.

NO, THE PILGRIMS WHO LANDED AT PLYMOUTH WERE NOT IMMIGRANTS. THEY WERE COLONISTS WHO CHOSE TO TRANSFER THEIR LIVES, PROPERTY, AND FAITH TO THE NEW WORLD. THEY ARRIVED WITH ALL THE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE NEEDED TO BUILD REPLICAS OF THEIR ENGLISH COMMUNITIES. THE PASSENGERS ON EACH SHIP BROUGHT TESTED AND FAMILIAR SKILLS AND SERVICES TO SUSTAIN THE NEW SETTLEMENT — COBBLER, BLACKSMITH, MILLER, BAKER, JOINER, BREWER, IRON MONGER, ETC.

KEY FIGURES IN PILGRIM COMMUNITIES, AND OFTEN AMONG THEIR ELECTED LEADERS, WERE THE PARISH MINISTERS AND THEIR ASSISTING CLERGY AND, AS THERE WAS NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE RELIGIOUS AND THE CIVIC LIFE OF THE NEW COMMUNITIES, THEIR CHURCH LEADERS OFTEN SERVED AS DE FACTO MAYORS, JUDGES OR GOVERNORS THROUGHOUT THE COLONIAL AREA. IN THE LIFE AND LITERATURE OF 17TH CENTURY COLONIAL NEW ENGLAND, GOD AND GOVERNMENT WERE INSEPARABLE AND SET A TONE FOR AMERICAN CULTURE THAT WAS STILL EVIDENT, ALTHOUGH DIMINISHED, UNTIL THE MID-20TH CENTURY.

RELIGION IN COLONIAL NEW ENGLAND MOSTLY MEANT PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY AND, ALTHOUGH AMERICA, THROUGH ITS FOUNDING POLITICAL DOCUMENTS, THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE (DI) AND CONSTITUTION, DECLARED ITSELF AS WELCOMING TO ALL FAITHS, PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY WAS ABLE TO CLAIM AND SUSTAIN A CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL RIGHT OF PRIOR PRESENCE NOT AVAILABLE TO OTHER FAITHS AND WHICH HAS RETAINED AN ENDURING SPECIAL STATUS.

THE FAITH OF THE PILGRIMS COULD NOT SURVIVE LONG. IT WAS A PLAIN, DIRECT, POLITE, UNADORNED AND PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO GOD AND AN EXPRESSION OF THANKS FOR HIS BLESSINGS THAT WAS BEST SUITED TO THEIR SMALL, CONTAINED COMMUNITIES. SUCH A CLOSE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT COULD NOT ENDURE THE VAST CHANGES IN SCIENTIFIC AND OTHER THOUGHT OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT THAT ALTERED LIFE IN EUROPE IN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES. IN AMERICA, A CONSTANT STREAM OF NEW ARRIVALS OF DIFFERENT FAITHS AND NATIONALITIES AND A GROWING MARITIME TRADE AND FISHING ECONOMY BROUGHT WITH THEM NEW WAYS, NEW POPULATIONS AND NEW COMMERCE THAT OVERWHELMED THE CORDIAL AND INTENSE FAITH THAT HAD BOUND THE PILGRIMS TOGETHER IN THE COURSE OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN ENGLAND AND THEIR EXTRAORDINARY RELOCATION TO THE NEW WORLD.

WHO CARES?

OUR SOCIETY IS A MIXTURE OF CULTURES — ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, ARTISTIC, ETHNIC, SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS, ETC. — JUST AS OUR CONTEMPORARY CIVILIZATION IS A MIXTURE OF SOCIETIES; AND FOR ALL OF THESE ENTITIES AT BOTH LEVELS THEIR DIFFERENCES SERVE TO BOTH DISTINGUISH THEM AND TO ESTABLISH IDENTITY. DISTINCTION DRAWS LINES OF SEPARATION AND DEFINES SPACE; IDENTITY DERIVES FROM HOW WE DEVELOP WITHIN THAT SPACE AND HOW WE USE IT TO FURTHER OUR UNDERSTANDING OF OURSELVES AND OTHERS.

WE ARE IN A PERIOD OF ENORMOUS ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSITION. IN HISTORY BOOKS, SUCH PERIODS MAY BE DELINEATED BY DEVICES SUCH AS LINES, SHADING, DATES OR OTHER DEVICES WHICH ATTEMPT TO SPECIFY THEIR CHARACTERISTICS SO THAT HISTORICAL TEXTS AND CHARTS CAN APPEAR TO BE PRECISE. NO SUCH PRECISION IS AVAILABLE AT THE EYE OF THE STORM TO THOSE WHO LIVE THROUGH THEM, AS WE DO NOW.

WE DO KNOW THAT OUR NATIONAL AND OTHER BROAD BRUSH CULTURES ARE UNDERLAID BY MULTIPLE SUBSETS TO WHICH THE PASSAGE OF TIME AND HUMAN ACTIONS CAN OFFER DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES. SOME CULTURES REFLECT FAR MORE HUMAN AGENCY THAN OTHERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE THAT EMPHASIZE TECHNOLOGY AND INDUSTRIALIZATION, BUT ALL CULTURES, HISTORICAL OR CONTEMPORARY ARE SUBJECT TO HUMAN CONTROL AND DIRECTION.

THIS MAY SOUND STRANGE TO US, BUT ONLY BECAUSE, UNLIKE MANY OTHER COUNTRIES, WE ARE NOT USED TO THINKING OF OUR “CULTURES” AS MATTERS OF PRIORITY. NORTH KOREA, FOR INSTANCE, UNDER ITS LAST THREE LEADERS OF THE KIM DYNASTY, HAS PURSUED A COURSE OF MILITARY STRENGTH WITH DOMESTIC POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CULTURES OF VIOLENCE AND REPRESSION. FOR THREE GENERATIONS WE HAVE WATCHED THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF KOREA (PRK) EXTINGUISH ITS POPULATION’S MOST BASIC RIGHTS AND REWARDS IN FAVOR OF OBTAINING ARMS AND TECHNOLOGY THAT CAN FULFILL ITS GOAL OF ACHIEVING EQUALITY WITH THE WEST, AND PARTICULARLY THE U.S.

OUR RECOURSE TO THIS GROWING THREAT DURING THE QUARTER CENTURY OF THE CLINTON, BUSH II AND OBAMA PRESIDENCIES HAS BEEN TO OFFER FOOD AND CONCESSIONS UNDER AGREEMENTS THAT THE PRK THEN DISREGARDED AFTER THEIR BENEFITS HAD BEEN RECEIVED. AND, AS AN EVEN MORE BIZARRE TWIST, AT ONE POINT WE SANCTIONED A TRIP TO THE PRK AND A MEETING WITH KIM IL SUN BY DENNIS RODMAN, A HIGHLY FLAMBOYANT AND ERRATIC PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL PLAYER, BECAUSE PRES. KIM LIKED BASKETBALL.

PART OF OUR POLICY TOWARDS THE PRK INCLUDED ATTEMPTING TO GET CHINA TO APPLY MODERATING PRESSURE ON ITS MILITANT NEIGHBOR, BUT SIGNS OF SUCH AN INTERVENTION ARE NOT PUBLICLY AVAILABLE AND, ALTHOUGH WE CERTAINLY MADE BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO CHINA, WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT TRULY FORCEFUL PRESSURE WAS APPLIED. HAVING JUSTLY EARNED A REPUTATION OF INSCRUTABILITY FOR MOST OF ITS LONG HISTORY, CHINA IS ADEPT AT PLAYING ITS DIPLOMATIC CARDS SO THAT ITS PRESENCE AND POWER CAN BE SEEN AS HELPFUL TO THE PRK OR THE US, BUT PRIMARILY ITS ACTIONS, WHETHER PUBLIC

OR PRIVATE, MUST SERVE ITS OWN INTERESTS.

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ANOTHER FASCINATING EXAMPLE OF DEDICATED HUMAN CONTROL OVER NATIONAL CULTURE HAS TAKEN PLACE IN JAPAN WHICH MAINTAINED ITS ISOLATED ISLAND CULTURE WITHOUT FOREIGN RESIDENTS OR TRADE UNTIL COMMODORE MATTHEW PERRY ANCHORED US NAVY SHIPS IN TOKYO BAY IN THE MID-19TH CENTURY.

LACKING THE FLASH-POINTS OF LAND BORDERS AND FOREIGN POPULATIONS, JAPAN'S CULTURE MIGHT HAVE BEEN A PEACEFUL ONE, BUT ACTUALLY HAD A LONG HISTORY OF CENTURIES OF WARFARE BETWEEN TRIBES, FAMILIES AND LANDOWNERS WHO, IN DANGEROUS TIMES WITH LITTLE OR NO CENTRAL LAW, MAINTAINED PRIVATE ARMIES FOR THEIR OWN DEFENSE AND, WHEN OPPORTUNITIES AROSE, TO ATTACK A VULNERABLE NEIGHBOR.

AFTER PERRY'S FLEET ESTABLISHED OUR PRESENCE AND "OPENED" JAPAN TO INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE THE FRAGRANCE OF WORLD TRADE BROUGHT WITH IT A WHIFF OF WORLD POWER. ITS EARLIER HISTORY OF WARRING TRIBES HAD BEEN ABANDONED FOR A UNIFYING NATIONAL LEADER IN THE 16TH CENTURY WHO WAS FOLLOWED BY THE MODERN PERIOD'S HEREDITARY EMPEROR. THE LATTER WAS ACCORDED HOLY REVERENCE AND BECAME A KIND OF LEGENDARY SUN-GOD TO WHOM ALL JAPANESE — MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN — OWED THEIR LOYALTY AND LIVES.

AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY JAPAN EMBARKED UPON A SERIES OF WARS WITH NATIONS MUCH LARGER THAN ITSELF. FIRST CAME THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR OF 1894-5 WITH CHINA WHICH CONCLUDED WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SUPPOSEDLY INDEPENDENT KOREA AND THE TRANSFER OF FORMOSA (TAIWAN) AND SOME SMALL NEARBY ISLANDS TO JAPAN. THEN IN THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR OF 1904-05 IT DEFEATED RUSSIAN LAND FORCES IN A BATTLE OVER MANCHURIA AND ALSO DESTROYED THE IMPERIAL RUSSIAN FLEET. JAPAN'S GROWING SENSE OF WORLD POWER SENT ITS TROOPS BACK TO THE CHINESE MAINLAND IN 1937 TO WREST TERRITORY FROM A COLLAPSING CHINA. THE HOLY CULT STATUS OF THE EMPEROR, FOR WHOM IT WAS BOTH A DUTY AND PRIVILEGE TO DIE, MADE THE JAPANESE MILITARY A FEARLESS AND VICIOUS FORCE WHICH COMMITTED ACTS OF UNSPEAKABLE CRUELTY AGAINST BOTH OPPOSING FORCES AND CIVILIANS IN SE ASIA, CHINA AND THE PHILIPPINES UNTIL THE END OF WW II.

HERE'S THE CULTURAL "KICKER". FOR CENTURIES OF JAPANESE LIFE, BOTH IN THEIR ISLAND DOMAIN AND AT WAR ELSEWHERE, VIOLENCE HAD BEEN AN ACCEPTABLE AND POWERFUL ELEMENT OF THE JAPANESE NATIONALIST CULTURE. WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF OUR GOVERNMENT OF OCCUPATION IN 1945 REGULATIONS WERE IMPOSED THAT DRASTICALLY ALTERED MANY ASPECTS OF JAPANESE LIFE INCLUDING WORSHIP OF THE EMPEROR AS A DEITY. BY THE 20TH CENTURY'S END JAPAN HAD BECOME DEMOCRATIZED, AMERICANIZED, VERY WEALTHY AND ENJOYED MAJOR WORLD POWER STATUS.

THIS CHANGE IN JAPAN'S MILITARY, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS CULTURES WAS INITIATED BY OUR OCCUPATION FORCES, BUT THEY ARE LONG GONE AND JAPAN'S

VERY DIFFERENT DIRECTION AND WAY OF FUNCTIONING IS NOW FREE-STANDING AND UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE JAPANESE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEW INSTITUTIONS. ALONG THE WAY, THERE WERE SURELY FRICTIONS AND EVEN TODAY NOT ALL CHANGES ARE VIEWED WITHOUT SOME RELUCTANCE, BUT THE COUNTRY'S PATH IS DIFFERENT AND ITS CULTURE CHANGED.

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SIMILARLY, GERMAN POLITICAL CULTURE EXPERIENCED RAPID AND DEEP CHANGES IN THE 20TH CENTURY. EMERGING FROM THE 19TH CENTURY A LEADER IN EUROPE'S LITERARY AND MUSICAL WORKS, GERMANY WAS MILITARIZED BY KAISER WILHELM AND ITS ARMY SACRIFICED TO THE PROLONGED SLAUGHTER OF STALEMATE TRENCH WARFARE ON THE WESTERN FRONT. FOLLOWING A DIFFICULT DECADE OF PUNITIVE PEACE AFTER ITS DEFEAT IN WW I, CIVIL UNREST BECAME FREQUENT AND PROVIDED THE OCCASIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE RISE OF HITLER AND HIS NATIONAL SOCIALIST (NAZI) PARTY AND THEIR ELECTION TO CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT IN 1933.

ONCE AGAIN GERMANS RESPONDED TO THE SIREN SONG OF MILITARISM, BUT THIS TIME TO FIGHT A DIFFERENT KIND OF GLOBAL WAR WITH EVEN MORE DRASTIC CHANGES ON THE HOME FRONT AND TO THEIR GOVERNMENT. HITLER BRUTALLY ATTACKED AND SUPPRESSED ALL THOUGHT AND ACTIVITIES NOT SUPPORTIVE OF THE THIRD REICH. CIVIL RIGHTS GAVE WAY TO FORCED LABOR, IMPRISONMENT, TORTURE AND LOSS OF PROPERTY AND VOTING PRIVILEGES.

TO THIS DAY, IT IS NOT EASY TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE GERMAN PEOPLE WHO DESCENDED FROM GOETHE, MENDELSSOHN, BEETHOVEN AND SCHUBERT COULD HAVE SO COMPLETELY ABANDONED THEIR CULTURAL CHARACTER TO TAKE ON HITLER'S MASS MILITARY HYSTERIA.

HITLER'S CLAIMED THOUSAND YEAR THIRD REICH LASTED ONLY TWELVE YEARS. AT THE END OF THE WAR IT WAS DIVIDED AND BOTH PARTS PLACED UNDER MILITARY OCCUPATION. WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME AND THE HELP OF OUR MARSHALL PLAN, WEST GERMANY WAS ABLE TO REHABILITATE ITSELF AND REJOIN EUROPE'S RECOVERING TRADE AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN THE POSTWAR WORLD.

GERMANY'S IS A REMARKABLE CULTURAL JOURNEY IN A VERY BRIEF PERIOD OF ABOUT ONE GENERATION IN WHICH IT TWICE EMBRACED MILITARISM, AND DID SO THE SECOND TIME WITH SUCH VEHEMENCE THAT IT ELIMINATED EVERY SEMBLANCE OF WESTERN DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL THOUGHT. AS WITH JAPAN, WE CANNOT IGNORE THAT GERMANY'S REBIRTH OF ITS CHARACTER AND ECONOMY WAS ASSISTED BY MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF FINANCIAL AND OTHER FORMS OF ASSISTANCE FROM THE US AND OTHERS.

BEHIND EVERY DISCUSSION OF CULTURE LOOMS THE ISSUE OF PURITY. FOR SOME IT IS AN OUTRIGHT BENEFIT TO BE CELEBRATED; FOR OTHERS IT IS ONLY A DISTANT MEMORY OF TIMES LONG PAST. JAPAN'S INSISTENCE UPON RETAINING ITS NATIVE CULTURE EVEN AS, AFTER PERRY'S "OPENING", IT ENGAGED IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE, DIPLOMACY AND WARS IS AN EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENT AND ONE THAT SURVIVES TODAY IN ITS CONTINUING REFUSAL TO PERMIT IMMIGRATION TO ITS SHORES.

EVEN HITLER HAD DIFFICULTY IN CLAIMING CULTURAL PURITY FOR TERRITORIAL GERMANY OF THE 20TH CENTURY, WHICH WAS A RELATIVELY RECENT CONSTRUCT CARVED OUT OF BOTH THE NUMEROUS PRINCIPALITIES IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN EMPIRE IN THE AGE OF THE MONARCHIES. ADD THE MULTIPLE WARS, TRADE ROUTES, ROYAL MARRIAGES AND RELIGIOUS ARGUMENTS THAT ROILED EASTERN EUROPE FOR GENERATIONS AND HITLER'S REFUGE IN NORSE LEGENDS MAKES SENSE.

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BUT, EQUALLY AS IMPORTANT AS HUMAN AGENCY CAN BE IN CHANGING CULTURES, IT CAN BE KEY IN MAINTAINING A STATUS QUO. ISLAM EXPERIENCED A WIDE AND, FOR ITS DAY, RAPID GROWTH FROM ITS LATE 7TH CENTURY APPEARANCE IN SAUDI ARABIA. ITS SUCCESS CAN ONLY BE UNDERSTOOD IF WE RECOGNIZE THE LIMITS OF THE TECHNOLOGY AND METHODS AVAILABLE TO IT. TRAVEL FOR SOLDIERS, CONVERTS TO THE NEW FAITH, ITS ENFORCERS AND THEIR SUPPLIES WERE ACCOMPLISHED BY HORSE AND CAMEL, MOSTLY THE LATTER IN THE ARID AREA THAT STRETCHES FROM THE NW COAST OF AFRICA EASTWARD ACROSS SAUDI ARABIA, THROUGH AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN TO THE GREAT INDIAN DESERT.

IN ADDITION TO THE DIFFICULTIES POSED BY LONG DISTANCE TRAVEL, COMMUNICATION WAS EVEN MORE PRIMITIVE. AS THERE WAS NO PRINTED MATERIAL, ALL READING MATERIAL WAS HANDWRITTEN, MOSTLY IN ARABIC SCRIPT, AND THE SPOKEN WORD'S RANGE EXTENDED ONLY AS FAR AS THE HUMAN VOICE. ALL IN ALL, CONSIDERING THE OBSTACLES POSED BY ITS PROCESS OF CONQUEST, CONVERSION, ENFORCEMENT, INSTRUCTION, CONSOLIDATION AND CONTINUED OVERSIGHT, ISLAM'S BREAKOUT GROWTH WAS SURPRISINGLY RAPID, AND TODAY IT REMAINS THE DOMINANT RELIGION FROM GIBRALTAR TO INDONESIA.

BY THE 14TH CENTURY, ISLAM HAD REACHED THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT AND WAS ITS DOMINANT RELIGION WITH NATIVE HINDUS RESTRICTED TO A SMALL AREA (20% OR LESS OF THE TOTAL) IN THE SOUTH². THE HINDU FAITH, WITH ITS OFFSHOOTS, AND THEIR MULTIPLE DEITIES OF BOTH HUMAN AND ANIMAL FORM, CHALLENGED MUSLIM FAITH IN MANY MORE WAYS AND GAVE GREATER OFFENSE THAN CHRISTIANITY OR JUDAISM TO WHICH ISLAM ACKNOWLEDGED A CONNECTION. AS A CONSEQUENCE, THE ISLAMIC PRESENCE IN INDIA WAS ALWAYS ONE OF BITTER AND ENDURING CONTENTION.

FAST FORWARD TO WW II WHEN INDIA'S LOCATION BETWEEN GERMAN FORCES IN EUROPE/NORTH AFRICA AND THE JAPANESE IN SE ASIA WAS STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT, AND INDIA PROVIDED BASES, SUPPLIES AND FIGHTING FORCES OF BOTH MUSLIM AND HINDU FAITHS. THIS SUPPORT CREATED A DEBT OF HONOR THAT ALTERED THE COLONIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND ENGLAND AND WAS A KEY FACTOR IN INDIA'S SEEKING AND GAINING ITS INDEPENDENCE AFTER THE WAR.

IN ADDITION TO THE USUAL REARRANGEMENT OF TERRITORIAL BORDERS THAT FOLLOW WARS, THE NEWLY FORMED UNITED NATIONS (UN) PROVIDED A GLOBAL FORUM TO WHICH THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES COULD APPEAL FOR ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND LEGAL FREEDOM. INDIA'S CASE WAS AS STRONG AS ANY AND ITS

MUSLIM, HINDU AND BRITISH LEADERS COMBINED THROUGH LONG AND HEATED NEGOTIATIONS TO PRODUCE A PLAN FOR PARTITION THAT CREATED TWO MUSLIM ZONES IN THE NORTH AND A FAR LARGER HINDU SECTOR IN THE SOUTH. THIS PARTITION REQUIRED THE RELOCATION OF MILLIONS OF HINDUS AND MUSLIMS WHICH, IN TURN, BROUGHT ABOUT THE GREAT VIOLENCE AND BRUTAL SLAUGHTER FROM BOTH SIDES THAT IS OFTEN THE HALLMARK OF RELIGIOUS WARFARE.

POSTWAR PARTITION IN 1947 OFFERED WHAT BOTH FAITHS IN INDIA HAD CLAMORED FOR — TWO DISTINCT, RELIGIOUSLY DEFINED HOMELANDS WHERE EACH SECT COULD LIVE IN PEACE WITHOUT THE PRESENCE OR INTERFERENCE OF THE OTHER. GIVEN THE ABILITY FOR HUMAN AGENCY TO CHANGE CULTURAL DIRECTIONS, ONE WOULD THINK THAT PARTITION WOULD HAVE PROVIDED A REAL OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE THE FUTURE WAY OF LIFE FOR MUSLIMS AND HINDUS, BUT OLD HATREDS DO NOT DIE EASILY, AND TODAY THE AGES OLD MUSLIM/HINDU RELIGIOUS STRIFE, ALTHOUGH NO LONGER ON ITS PREVIOUS SCALE, IS STILL A PART OF INDIA'S POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ORDER AND GIVES EVIDENCE THAT HUMAN EFFORT CAN BE USED TO MAINTAIN CULTURAL STATUS QUO AS WELL AS TO CHANGE IT.

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HITLER'S REICH AND JAPAN'S RISING SUN EMPIRE WENT TO WAR PRIMARILY FOR THE HISTORIC REASONS OF TERRITORIAL AND ECONOMIC (I.E., RAW MATERIALS) EXPANSION, AND THEIR WARTIME CULTURES WERE DISCARDED AND REPLACED RELATIVELY QUICKLY BY THE NEW GOVERNMENTS AND REGULATIONS ORDERED BY THE ALLIES' FORCES OF OCCUPATION.

THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN BOTH THE OUTCOME AND THE NATURE OF THE WW II AND MUSLIM/HINDU CONFLICTS, AND IT IS CALLED RELIGION. RELIGION BRINGS TO ANY ETHNIC, SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC OR TERRITORIAL CONFRONTATION AN IDENTITY ELEMENT WHOSE INTENSITY CAN FRUSTRATE THE BEST INTENTIONS OF PEACEMAKERS' EFFORTS.

JAPAN'S EMPEROR WAS SEEN TO HAVE A LEGENDARY DIVINE ORIGIN AND STATUS THAT INCLUDED LIVING IN THE ISOLATION OF THE ROYAL PALACE. HIS POSITION IN GOVERNMENT WAS LARGELY CEREMONIAL, BUT NEVERTHELESS, HE SERVED AS A REVERED IDENTITY FIGURE FOR MILLIONS OF JAPANESE.

RELIGION, WHEN IT IS JOINED WITH GOVERNMENT IN THE FORM OF A RELIGIOUS STATE, OR THEOCRACY, CONFLATES STATE AUTHORITY WITH HUMAN IDENTITY/FAITH. THIS IS AN EXPLOSIVE COMBINATION THAT CAN WREAK HAVOC WITH CIVIC AND INDIVIDUAL RESTRAINTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

STRANGELY, ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY, THE WORLD'S TWO LARGEST RELIGIONS, TRACE TO A COMMON ANCESTOR IN ABRAHAM AND CLAIM THEIR HOLY STATUS BY GOD'S WORD HAVING BEEN DELIVERED TO THE PROPHET MUHAMMED OR JESUS CHRIST AND THEN TO MANKIND. OVER THE CENTURIES THESE TWO RELIGIONS HAVE LEFT A STRONG AND SOMETIMES DEFINING, IMPRINT ON THE CULTURES OF WHICH THEY ARE PART, AND THE IDENTITIES THEY FOSTER CAN BE AS DIFFERENT AS THEIR OWN MESSAGES AND METHODS.

FOR CENTURIES, ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY ENGAGED IN

EXTREMELY VIOLENT RELIGIOUS WARS AGAINST EACH OTHER AND THEN AMONG THEMSELVES. THEN, WAR WAS A COMMON DENOMINATOR FOR CIVILIZATION. PERHAPS AS FAR BACK AS THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT, A SENSIBILITY BEGAN TO FORM THAT WARFARE WAS NOT THE BEST USE OF HUMAN TIME AND ENERGY. WHILE ITS EFFECT UPON HUMAN BEHAVIOR HAS BEEN UNEVEN AT BEST, THIS EMERGING ATTITUDE MIGHT HAVE HAD THE EFFECT OF PREVENTING WARS THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE OCCURRED IN THE PAST THREE CENTURIES.

ALL THREE DESERT RELIGIONS EMPLOY THE MEANS OF A HUMAN MALE FIGURE TO CONVEY GOD’S COMMANDS — MOSES FOR JUDAISM, JESUS FOR CHRISTIANS AND MUHAMMED FOR MUSLIMS — BUT THE MESSAGES ARE VERY DIFFERENT. EVEN, IF WE ALLOW, AS ALL THREE FAITHS DO, THAT THERE IS ONE GOD, THE DIRECTIONS CONVEYED THROUGH THE VARIOUS PERSONALITIES AND PROCLAMATIONS ARE VERY DIFFERENT.

ISLAM’S TRUTHS ARE STATED IN THE QURAN AND CALL FOR AGGRESSIVE AFFIRMATIONS OF ITS FAITH WHICH INCLUDE VIOLENCE AGAINST INFIDELS — THOSE WHO DO NOT PRACTICE IT. CONSIDER, THEN, TWO NEIGHBOR STATES, PERHAPS SEPARATED BY A RIVER, BOTH OF WHOM, UNDER CENTURIES OF MONARCHICAL AND ARBITRARY RULE HAVE ATTACKED THE OTHER TO EXTEND THEIR TERRITORY AND/OR AUTHORITY. SUCH A HISTORY ESTABLISHES A RHYTHM AND RATIONALE THAT EVENTUALLY MODERATES DIFFERENCES AND BECOMES A POLITICAL NORM SIMILAR TO THE EXTENDED WARFARE BETWEEN FRANCE AND GERMANY.

BUT SUPPOSE ONE SUCH STATE BECOMES HOME TO SOME FORM OF RADICAL ISLAM. THEN, THE EMOTIONAL, POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN NEIGHBORS THAT HAVE EXISTED FOR GENERATIONS ARE DESTROYED AND ANY SUBSEQUENT HOSTILITIES WILL BE MARKED BY THE GREATER INTENSITY, VIOLENCE AND BRUTALITY OF MOST RELIGIOUS WARS AND, ESPECIALLY, THOSE THAT HAVE ENABLED ISLAM’S EXPANSION.

“...HUMAN AGENCY CAN FORM AND DIRECT CULTURE,
AND ISLAM IS PROOF POSITIVE.”

ISLAM’S REMARKABLE SUCCESS IN THE THOUSAND YEARS OF ITS EXPANSION INTO EUROPE AND ASIA WAS NOT SOLELY THE RESULT OF ITS MILITARY AGGRESSION AND ITS “CONVERT OR DIE” OCCUPATION POLICY. FOR, UNLIKE CHRISTIANITY AND THE OTHER RELIGIONS IT CONFRONTED, ISLAM WAS THEN, AND IS STILL, NOT MERELY A RELIGION, BUT ALSO A CULTURE WITH ITS OWN LAW AND STRICT CONTROL OVER DIET, DRESS, MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, CIVIL RIGHTS, INHERITANCE, EDUCATION, FERTILITY, ETC. ISLAM IS THE FULL “KIT” AND IT IS, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, IMPOSED, RATHER THAN CHOSEN; AND BECAUSE IT IS SUCH A SELF-CONTAINED FORCE THAT HARBORS ITS ENERGIES, ITS FOLLOWERS ARE INTENSELY ENGAGED IN MANY OF ITS EXPRESSIONS OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT, FAITH AND LIFE. AMONG MUSLIMS THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT HUMAN AGENCY CAN FORM AND DIRECT CULTURE, AND ISLAM IS PROOF POSITIVE.

IN THE EARLY YEARS OF ITS BREAK-OUT GROWTH, ISLAM’S RAPID, DEADLY AND UNCOMPROMISING TACTICS LED IT TO BE

REFERRED TO AS “THE SWORD OF ISLAM” — AN APT METAPHOR WHICH SUCCINCTLY REPRESENTED THAT THE FAITH, THE CULTURE AND THEIR METHODS WERE INSEPARABLE IN THEIR IMPACT ON THOSE TARGETED FOR SUBJUGATION. A SWORD IS AN AWESOME OFFENSIVE WEAPON, ESPECIALLY AGAINST OPPONENTS WITHOUT ARMS OR WARNING, AS ISLAM REPEATEDLY DEMONSTRATED. ITS TRIPLE THREAT CAPABILITY SIMULTANEOUSLY STRUCK AT THE HEARTS OF ITS VICTIMS COMMUNAL AND PERSONAL INSTITUTIONS, AND RENDERED ANY RESISTANCE IMPOSSIBLE OR, AT BEST, FLEETING. QUITE SIMPLY, CULTURAL ISLAM — INCLUDING ITS FAITH, LAWS AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR PROCLAIMED IN THE QURAN — WAS ABLE TO OVERWHELM THE MENTAL, SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL RESOURCES OF ITS MOSTLY UNSUSPECTING VICTIMS.

IN OUR WESTERN CIVILIZATION (WCIV), WHICH RELIES ON ITS INHERITED HISTORY, LANGUAGE, LAWS AND THOUGHT TO GUIDE THE PROCESS OF GOVERNMENT, WE FAVOR DEBATE, NEGOTIATION AND JUDICIAL SETTLEMENT TO RESOLVE BOTH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DISPUTES AND TO EVEN DEFINE OUR OWN CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS. WE SHOULD BE AWARE THAT THESE ARE WESTERN CONCEPTS WITHOUT PRACTICAL USE OR RELEVANCE FOR MOST OF ISLAM’S EXISTENCE AND WHICH ARE TOTALLY SCORNE BY CURRENT RADICALIZED, JIHADIST SECTS. THIS MAY SEEM LIKE AN UNNECESSARY WARNING, BUT THROUGHOUT WCIV — IN NATIONAL LEGISLATURES AND JUDICIARIES, AS WELL AS INTERNATIONAL UNIONS, TREATIES, ASSEMBLIES, ORGANIZATIONS — OUR PATIENT AND PEACEFUL OVERFOCUS/RELIANCE UPON PROCESS CAN BE USED BY OTHERS TO OUR DISADVANTAGE.

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IN OUR REPUBLIC, THE FOUNDERS INCLUDED A MEANS FOR AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION, BUT, AS IT IS A LENGTHY PROCESS THAT REQUIRES MORE THAN A MAJORITY VOTE IN STATE LEGISLATURES AND CONGRESS TO SUCCEED, ONLY TWENTY-SEVEN AMENDMENTS HAVE BECOME LAW; AND THE FIRST TEN OF THESE — THE BILL OF RIGHTS — WERE RATIFIED IN 1791. IN 225 YEARS SINCE THEN WE HAVE PASSED ONLY SEVENTEEN AMENDMENTS.

ONE COMMENT OFTEN HEARD FROM BOTH REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS, IN LONG-RUNNING ARGUMENTS, IS “THAT’S THE LAW. IF YOU DON’T LIKE IT, CHANGE IT.” THAT CHOICE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A DIFFICULT ONE AND IN OUR PRESENT DEEPLY DIVIDED STATE IT IS SUCH A REMOTE OPTION THAT IT EFFECTIVELY ENDS DISCUSSION. WE MAY WELL HAVE REACHED A POINT IN OUR POLITICAL HISTORY WHEN OUR DIVISION IS SO PERVERSIVE THAT UNITY IS NOT AVAILABLE WHEN NEEDED TO ADDRESS ISSUES THAT ARISE FROM THE ERRORS AND TERRORS OF OUR TIME.

PREVIOUS AMENDMENTS HAVE SUCCEEDED ONLY AFTER EXTENSIVE DEBATE AT STATE AND FEDERAL LEVELS. THE PROBLEM TODAY IS THAT DYSFUNCTION IS SO WIDE AND DEEP THAT THE PROCESS OF MEANINGFUL INQUIRY, DEBATE AND JUDGMENT MAY NO LONGER BE AVAILABLE. THIS IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE AS WE FACE A GROWING ISLAMIC PRESENCE THAT HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO QUESTION OUR LAW AND TO ATTEMPT TO REPLACE IT WITH MUSLIM SHARIA.

SO FAR THESE EFFORTS HAVE BEEN DIRECTED TO SPECIFIC AND LIMITED AREAS OF THE LAW, BUT THEIR PRESSURE IN THE FUTURE IS LIKELY TO PERSIST AND INCREASE, AS IT HAS IN THE PAST. WHAT

MAKES OUR DEFENSE SO DIFFICULT IS THAT THE MUSLIM LEGAL ARGUMENT IS BASED ON THE BROAD AND GRACIOUS LANGUAGE OF OUR CONSTITUTION AND, AS WE HAVE OFTEN SEEN IN OUR PAST, CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES DEFY QUICK RESOLUTION IN OUR COURTS AND CAN PRODUCE SURPRISING RESULTS.

ANOTHER PROBLEM IS THAT THE CORRUPTION OF SPIRIT AND PURPOSE THAT HAS SETTLED OVER CONGRESS IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY SPOILER. THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS AND OUR ABILITY TO GOVERN OURSELVES ACCORDING TO OUR HISTORICAL VALUES HAS BEEN SEVERELY DAMAGED.

CONGRESS LAYS CLAIM FOR ITS SLOW PACE AND MEAGRE LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO ITS INSTITUTIONAL STATUS AS THE NATION'S MODERATOR OF POLITICAL PACE AND DIRECTION. TO SOME EXTENT THIS IS TRUE, AS MEANINGFUL CHANGE IN CONGRESS CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED BY ITS OWN ACTION, BUT THE PRIVILEGE HAS STEADILY BEEN ABUSED.

THERE IS, HOWEVER, ONE IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF CHANGE OF WHICH BOTH POLITICAL PARTIES AND ALL AMERICANS SHOULD BE AWARE. NOT SURPRISINGLY, IT HAS TO DO WITH COMPENSATION WHICH, ALONG WITH OTHER ASPECTS OF GOVERNMENT, CHANGED AS THE NATION GREW LARGER, MORE POPULOUS AND WEALTHIER; AND SERVICE IN CONGRESS MOVED FROM ITS ORIGINAL PART-TIME STATUS TO FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT WITH LONGER PERIODS OF RESIDENCE IN DC, MORE FREQUENT TRAVEL AND A HEAVIER WORK LOAD. THE LATTER BY SOME FORM OF POLITICAL ALCHEMY UNDERSTOOD ONLY IN WASHINGTON, WAS DEALT WITH BY REDUCING THE CONGRESSIONAL WORK WEEK TO THREE DAYS.

FOR MOST OF ITS HISTORY CONGRESS' MEMBERS SHARED THE REALIZATION THAT THEIR EMPLOYER OF LAST RESORT WAS THE AMERICAN VOTER WHO, REGARDLESS OF PARTY, MADE THE ALL-IMPORTANT CHOICE IN THE VOTING BOOTH; AND THIS POWER, EXERCISED BY THE VOTER, ULTIMATELY DETERMINED CONGRESSIONAL COMPENSATION, EMPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT BENEFITS — I.E., LIFESTYLE.

WITH THE ARRIVAL OF OUR POSTWAR ERA OF SUPER POWER AND SUPER PROSPERITY, THE FINANCIAL GROUND BENEATH CONGRESS BEGAN TO SHIFT, AS ENORMOUS AMOUNTS OF MONEY WERE ACCUMULATED BY SPECIAL INTERESTS AND SENT TO DC TO OBTAIN SPECIAL RESULTS. THERE, THEY ARE DISPENSED TO ACHIEVE MAXIMUM IMPACT BY PROFESSIONAL LOBBYISTS.

THE FULL-TIME, PAID LOBBYIST IS A DIRECT CONSEQUENCE OF OUR SUPER PROSPERITY AND THE MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF MONEY AND POWER THAT TARGETED, FLOWED INTO AND WERE THEN DISTRIBUTED BY GOVERNMENT. FOR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS THIS CHANGED SALARIES AND BENEFITS, LIFESTYLES, HOW THEY RAISED FUNDS, FORMED OR SUPPORTED LEGISLATION, AND THE NATURE OF THEIR POST-CONGRESS RETIREMENT.

“...WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, THE RULES OF THE GAME OF GOVERNMENT HAVE CHANGED.”

CONGRESSIONAL LIFESTYLES, CAREERS AND RETIREMENTS ARE NOW DETERMINED BY BOTH THE VOTER AND SPECIAL INTERESTS WHO SPEAK THROUGH THEIR LOBBYISTS. IN A BODY OF 535 MEMBERS, MANY WAYS OCCUR FOR APPRECIATIVE LOBBYISTS TO REWARD WILLING LEGISLATORS. ONE THAT IS FREQUENTLY USED IS APPOINTMENT TO A LARGELY CEREMONIAL, RETIREMENT POSITION AT A TRADE, CONSUMER OR POLITICAL RELATIONS ORGANIZATION. SUCH AN ORGANIZATION IS MOST LIKELY TO BE ONE WHOSE INDUSTRY THE RETIRED LAWMAKER HAS COME TO KNOW OR REGULATE IN HIS/HER CONGRESSIONAL YEARS, AND IS CERTAIN TO OFFER A GENEROUS SALARY OFTEN IN THE ONE TO FIVE MILLION DOLLAR RANGE. TREMORS FROM THE POLITICAL GROUND ON WHICH OUR GOVERNMENT RESTS USUALLY EXTEND TO OUR CULTURE AND, WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, THE RULES OF THE GAME OF GOVERNMENT HAVE CHANGED.

AND WHY DON'T WE?

WE CANNOT ACCURATELY PREDICT THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF OUR THOUGHT AND ACTION NOW ANY MORE THAN THOSE WHO LIVED IN PAST AGES — ENLIGHTENMENT, EXPLORATION, COLONIALISM — COULD THEN. THE ONE CERTAINTY, NOW MORE RECOGNIZED THAN IN PRIOR TIMES, IS THAT WHATEVER ACTION WE TAKE IN PURSUIT OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, POLITICAL OR TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS MUST COMPLY WITH THE LIMITATIONS OF OUR PLANET'S FINITE SUPPLIES OF NATURAL RESOURCES; AND THAT WE MUST SHARE THESE RESOURCES WITH A HOST OF OTHER SPECIES WHO FORM THE WEB OF LIFE ON EARTH.

WHETHER CLUMSILY BY HABITAT DESTRUCTION OR ADROITLY BY SKILLED GENETIC ALTERATIONS, THE REMOVAL OF A SPECIES CAN BRING ABOUT UNANTICIPATED AND/OR DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES.

“...AND WE KNOW, OR SHOULD KNOW, THAT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS UNENDING GROWTH...”

WE KNOW THAT OUR ECOLOGICAL CHOICES ARE AS IMPORTANT TO OUR FUTURE AS OUR BIOLOGICAL DETERMINATIONS AND THAT OUR SHARED ENVIRONMENT IS SUBJECT TO LAWS AND DISCIPLINES TO WHICH WE MUST ADHERE. SIMILARLY, WE KNOW THAT ENDLESS EXPANSION OF OUR MONEY SUPPLY BY DEBT BEYOND OUR MEANS MUST END BADLY. AND WE KNOW, OR SHOULD KNOW, THAT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS UNENDING GROWTH, AS THE CONSTANT GEOMETRIC INCREASE OF POPULATION'S DEMANDS WILL SOON OVERWHELM THE ARITHMETIC EXPRESSION OF PRODUCTION SYSTEMS CALLED UPON TO PROVIDE IT.

IN THE MATTER OF RECOGNIZING THE VERY DIFFERENT CLAIMS UPON OUR NATURAL RESOURCES BY “SUPPLY” AND “DEMAND”, WE MUST ATTEMPT TO SECURE AN INFORMED PEACE RATHER THAN AN IDEOLOGICAL VICTORY. WE WILL ADD MORE DETAIL ON THIS IN A LATER CHAPTER DEVOTED TO OUR ENVIRONMENTAL CULTURE.

THIS SHIFTING OF POLITICAL GROUND MEANT THAT

FOR MOST OF HUMAN HISTORY, CULTURAL CHANGE OCCURRED AT THE PACE OF A SLOWLY MOVING STREAM. THEN, AS NOW, NEW WAYS OF REGARDING AND RESPONDING TO THE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL FORCES OF OUR WORLD WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN MOLDING CULTURES, BUT MOVED MORE SLOWLY AND LESS FREQUENTLY THROUGH HISTORICAL SPACE.

TO THIS VITAL ELEMENT IN HOW WE SAW OURSELVES AND OUR WORLD WE GAVE THE NAME “PROGRESS”.

ALL WEAPONS WERE ONCE REVOLUTIONARY, CUTTING EDGE ADVANCES IN THE GLOBAL ART OF WARFARE. THE CATAPULT, WHICH LAUNCHED HEAVY STONE PROJECTILES AGAINST CASTLE WALLS AND INTO THEIR COURTYARDS, WAS “STATE OF THE ART” FOR CENTURIES. TODAY’S TECHNOLOGY MOVES SO RAPIDLY THAT OBSOLESCENCE HAS BECOME A KEY WORD IN THE MILITARY’S VOCABULARY.

OUR HUMAN CONCEPT OF DESTINY MIGHT WELL HAVE DIED OR BEEN DISCARDED HAD WE REGARDED IT ONLY AS SOME DISTANT AND ISOLATED PLACE IN OUR INTELLECTUAL UNIVERSE MUCH LIKE STARS IN OUR SKY. BUT GRADUALLY HUMAN THOUGHT DEVELOPED A CONCEPTION AND PATH CAPABLE OF LINKING OUR PRESENT WITH WHAT WE HOPED FOR THE FUTURE AND MEASURING THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM. TO THIS VITAL ELEMENT IN HOW WE SAW OURSELVES AND OUR WORLD WE GAVE THE NAME “PROGRESS”.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LONG LIVES OF OUR FOREBEARS’ WEAPONRY AND THE MUCH SHORTER LIVES OF OUR SYSTEMS HAS BEEN THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVANCES IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY THAT ACCOMPANIED THE 18TH CENTURY AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT, THE 19TH CENTURY INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION (IR) AND OUR RECENT CENTURY OF COMMUNICATIONS, FLIGHT AND ELECTRONIC ADVANCES.

PROGRESS APPLIES TO MANY AREAS OF OUR LIVES — MORALITY, ETHICS, ECONOMICS, TECHNOLOGY, INTELLECT AND, THE NECESSITY REQUIRED BY GROWING KNOWLEDGE AND POPULATIONS TO SHARE OUR FLEETING TIME AND LIMITED SPACE WITHOUT RESORTING TO SELF-DESTRUCTION. OVER THE CENTURIES, EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THIS BALANCE HAVE BEEN ONLY PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL. WE CAN TAKE SATISFACTION FROM HAVING NARROWLY AVOIDED ARMAGEDDON, BUT THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A TIME IN OUR PLANET’S RECORDED HISTORY WHEN WAR WAS NOT WAGED.

YEAR BY YEAR, ONE BY ONE, NEW TECHNOLOGIES HAVE APPEARED, BEEN ABSORBED AND HAVE MARKED OUR CULTURES — SOMETIMES CLEARLY, OFTEN LESS SO, BUT STILL, WHEN LOOKED AT CLOSELY, LEAVING TRAILS AND MARKERS THAT IDENTIFY US.

MAN’S MOST CONSISTENT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENDURANCE OF WAR HAVE BEEN HIS AGGRESSIVE NATURE AND THE TECHNOLOGY HE HAS DEVELOPED TO EXERCISE IT. EACH ONE COMPLEMENTS THE OTHER WITH THE RESULT THAT OUR HUMAN “PROGRESS” HAS NEVER BEEN FREE OF THE METHODS AND MOTIVES BY WHICH WE HAVE ENCOURAGED OUR ADVANCES IN WEAPONRY — I.E., GREATER DESTRUCTIVE POWER, RANGE, SPEED AND EASE OF DELIVERY WITH LESS COST, NOISE, SIZE AND DETECTABILITY.

CULTURAL ARITHMETIC

MANY OBSERVERS OF THEIR PATH THROUGH HISTORY VIEW CULTURE AS A PROCESS OF ACCRETION. LIVES ARE LIVED, GENERATIONS COME AND GO AND TIME PASSES WITH EACH ONE LEAVING SOMETHING OF ITSELF THAT BECOMES PART OF THE GROUP CULTURE. THESE CONTRIBUTIONS — WHETHER SCIENTIFIC, ARTISTIC, RELIGIOUS, ETC. OR MERELY STATISTICAL — ENGAGE IN COMPETITION AMONG THEMSELVES AND WITH OTHERS TO DETERMINE THEIR LONGEVITY AND TRUE VALUE, KNOWING ALL THE WHILE THAT, WHILE PERMANENCE IS A CONCEPT THAT MAY BE USEFUL FOR OUR WAYS OF THINKING, IT HAS NO PLACE IN THE LARGER NATURAL AND PHYSICAL LAWS OF EXISTENCE THAT APPLY TO OUR UNIVERSE, PLANET AND SPECIES.

“...WEAPONRY SCIENCE HAS ALWAYS BEEN, AND WILL PROBABLY REMAIN, A GROWTH INDUSTRY.”

OF THE LATTER, ONLY HUMANS HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO ENGINEER THEIR OWN DESTINY — TO SEEK, EXPAND, PRESERVE AND TO PASS ALONG KNOWLEDGE IN A FORM AND IN WAYS ACCESSIBLE BY OTHERS. WE DO NOT INCLUDE THE AMAZING INSTINCTUAL KNOWLEDGE, SO HIGHLY DEVELOPED AND PRACTICALLY USEFUL, THAT IS FOUND IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF ANT COLONIES AND BEE HIVES; OR THE COOPERATIVE GROUP BEHAVIOR PATTERNS IN MANY FISH, BIRDS AND HERDS WHICH ARE EMPLOYED BOTH OFFENSIVELY AND DEFENSIVELY TO SECURE FOOD, WATER, TERRITORY AND PROCREATION.

MULTIPLE HYDROGEN BOMB WARHEADS ON ROCKETS LAUNCHED FROM OFFSHORE SUBMARINES SUGGEST THAT WE MAY HAVE REACHED THE “PROMISED LAND” OF ARMAMENT DEVELOPMENT, BUT, THEN AGAIN, WEAPONRY SCIENCE HAS ALWAYS BEEN, AND WILL PROBABLY REMAIN, A GROWTH INDUSTRY.

DESTINY IS SIMPLY A WORD THAT DOES NOT EXIST IN OTHER SPECIES’ LANGUAGES. IT MAY BE FELT INSTINCTIVELY AT THE PHYSICAL SURVIVAL LEVEL, BUT IT DOES NOT TAKE THE NEXT STEPS TO INQUIRY, COMPARISON, PLANNING, REVISION AND PURSUIT

HUMAN AGENCY UPON CULTURE CAN TAKE SEVERAL FORMS. IT CAN BE ONE OF ADDITION, OR INCREASE, WHERE CULTURE IS EXTENDED TO NEW AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT, OR BY OUR

APPLICATION OF NEW TECHNOLOGY OR BY THE COMBINATION WITH ONE OR MORE OTHER CULTURES. SIMILARLY, IT CAN SUFFER LOSS, DISPERSAL, SHRINKAGE OR APPROPRIATION BY ANOTHER CULTURE. AND, FINALLY, HUMANS CAN IMPOSE A THIRD KIND OF FATE UPON THEIR CULTURES BY DOING NOTHING, BY ONLY OBSERVING WITH UNSEEING EYES OR TURNING AWAY FROM THE FORCES AT WORK PRODUCING CULTURAL COMPETITION, ADVANCE OR DECLINE. THESE DESTINATIONS WILL REAPPEAR WHEN WE EXAMINE OUR VARIOUS CULTURES INDIVIDUALLY, BUT THE PROCESS OF CULTURAL ABANDONMENT IS SO IMPORTANT AND UNRECOGNIZED IN OUR COUNTRY THAT WE TAKE A CLOSER LOOK HERE AT TWO EXAMPLES WITHIN OUR GOVERNMENT.

THE FIRST HAS TO DO WITH OUR ECONOMIC CULTURE WHICH ORIGINALLY WAS ONE OF THRIFT, PRECAUTION AND SURVIVAL. AS TRADITIONAL AND SENSIBLE AS THIS CULTURE WAS, IT COULD NOT SURVIVE IN OUR 19TH CENTURY OF WESTWARD EXPANSION. THE SPARE, PROTECTIVE ECONOMICS OF COLONIAL NEW ENGLAND WERE REJECTED IN FAVOR OF THE ABUNDANCE OF LAND, WEALTH, WATER AND GAME THAT WAS EVER PRESENT AS OUR SETTLERS MOVED ACROSS THE CONTINENT.

THIS ELEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCE PLENTY, WHICH WAS UNKNOWN TO OUR EUROPEAN FOREBEARS, PROVIDED THE BASIS FOR A NEW KIND OF ECONOMIC THINKING THAT OFFERED FREE LAND AS A STIMULUS TO INDIVIDUAL AND COMMERCIAL SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT. IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT, WITH SUCH A FREE-WHEELING, EARLY ATMOSPHERE, WE PROCEEDED TO DEVELOP A POWERFUL AND UNRESTRICTED FORM OF CAPITALISM WHICH INEVITABLY LED TO ABUSES. THESE WERE FOLLOWED BY GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS AT MODERATION VIA THE INTERSTATE COMMERCE ACT AND THE RAILROADS ACT, WHICH WERE SUCCESSFUL IN CURBING THE WORST EXCESSES OF THE AGE, BUT THE GETTING WAS GOOD AND BY THE END OF THE CENTURY A NEW AMERICAN CULTURE THAT CELEBRATED PLENTY AND POWER HAD EMERGED.

IN 1913, TWO GAME CHANGERS APPEARED IN THE FORM OF A FEDERAL INCOME TAX AND THE FEDERAL RESERVE BANK (FRB). THE FORMER TRANSFERRED WEALTH TO THE GOVERNMENT AND THE LATTER PLACED IT IN THE HANDS OF OUR PRIVATE BANKING SYSTEM. DURING THE 1930S' GREAT DEPRESSION (GD) ECONOMIC THEORY AND ACTIVITY SUFFERED A GLOBAL COLLAPSE, ONLY RELIEVED BY WW II WHOSE AFTERMATH CHANGED AMERICA'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CULTURE AND CHARACTER COMPLETELY.

WE WRAPPED OURSELVES IN THE CLOAK OF WORLD SUPERPOWER, AWASH IN MONEY AND POWER, WHILE OTHER NATIONS HAD TO DIG THEMSELVES OUT FROM THE WAR'S DESTRUCTION. WE GAVE MONEY AWAY TO BE LIKED, TO BE NEEDED AND TO BUY POLITICAL LOYALTY. THIS CULTURE WAS CARRIED TO THE EXTREME IN THE COLD WAR WHEN ANY IMPOVERISHED THIRD WORLD COUNTRY COULD TRIGGER MASSIVE GIVE-AWAYS AND/OR ARMS DEALS BY PROFESSING AN ANTI-COMMUNIST ATTITUDE AND ALIGNING ITS POLICIES AND RESOURCES WITH THE FREE WORLD.

IN THE GENERATION OF THE '50S, '60S AND '70S WE SPENT AND OVERSPENT MONEY FOR BOTH VALID AND FRIVOLOUS PURPOSES HERE AND ABROAD, AND WE FOUGHT SMALL AND LARGE WARS FUNDED BY DEBT RATHER THAN TAXATION IN WHICH "OLD BOY" WEAPONS PROCUREMENT PRACTICES REVEALED THE TRUTH OF PRES. EISENHOWER'S WARNING OF THE THREAT POSED BY OUR "MILITARY/INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX".

AS OUR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CLOCKS BEGAN TO RUN FASTER, OUR TRADITIONAL ELECTORAL MACHINERY WAS UNABLE TO KEEP PACE. NOT SURPRISINGLY, OUR CAPITALIST ECONOMIC SYSTEM, IN SEARCH OF "MORE", OPTED TO BYPASS OUR ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND "GO DIRECT" BY SETTING UP OFFICES IN DC'S POLITICAL SWAMP VIA THE SERVICES OF A WORKFORCE OF TALENTED, CONNECTED AND READILY AVAILABLE LOBBYISTS. THROUGH THE PASSAGE BY CONGRESS OF LEGISLATION FOR TAX LAWS, TRADE AGREEMENTS AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT OUR CORPORATE SECTOR WAS NOW PROPELLED, RATHER THAN CONSTRAINED, BY GOVERNMENT.

NO CLEARER EXAMPLE OF THIS CHANGE CAN BE FOUND THAN THAT IN OUR IMMIGRATION POLICY WHEN IN 1965 LYNDON JOHNSON AND EDWARD KENNEDY PUSHED THROUGH PASSAGE OF THE IMMIGRATION REFORM AND NATIONALITY (HART-CELLER) ACT. BY IT, OUR IMMIGRATION POLICY WAS TRANSFORMED FROM "WATCH DOG" TO "WELCOME WAGON", AND IMMIGRATION BECAME THE "POSTER BOY" OF THE BODY OF MULTICULTURAL, LEFTIST POLITICAL THOUGHT THAT HAD BEGUN TO ATTRACT NOTICE DURING THE JFK ADMINISTRATION.

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IN THE REAGAN PRESIDENCY TWO VERY SERIOUS ABANDONMENTS OF OUR POLITICAL CULTURE OCCURRED. THE FIRST WAS ECONOMIC. IT INVOLVED A SIMULTANEOUS INCREASE IN MILITARY SPENDING WITH MAJOR TAX CUTS. THIS WAS A CLEAR BREAK WITH OUR LONGSTANDING POLICY OF HAVING EITHER "GUNS" OR "BUTTER", BUT NOT ATTEMPTING BOTH AT THE SAME TIME. REAGAN ALMOST TRIPLED OUR NATIONAL DEBT TO ABOUT \$8 TRILLION, BUT MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE DOLLAR AMOUNT WAS THE MESSAGE THAT RISING DEBT WAS ACCEPTABLE IF OUR INTENTIONS WERE GOOD.

THIS MESSAGE WAS NOT LOST ON THE CONGRESS WHICH NOTED THAT BUDGETS COULD BE "BUSTED" WITH IMPUNITY AND WITHOUT CONSEQUENCE. ACTUALLY, BUDGETS, THEMSELVES, FELL OUT OF FAVOR AND WERE REPLACED BY THE FAR MORE LAX PROCESS OF CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS.

THE SECOND ABANDONMENT OF OUR POLITICAL CULTURE WAS MORE SOCIAL IN ITS IMPACT ALTHOUGH IT ALSO CARRIED WIDE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES. AND, AGAIN, THE TOPIC WAS IMMIGRATION WHICH OVER THE TWO DECADES SINCE THE 1965 ACT HAD SHOWN EXPONENTIAL GROWTH FOR BOTH LEGAL AND ILLEGAL ENTRANTS.

NO EFFORTS AT ENFORCEMENT
WERE MADE AND THE "GRAND BARGAIN"
BECAME A "GRAND HALF-BARGAIN".

SEEKING A "GRAND BARGAIN" TO SETTLE THE VEXING ISSUE, PRES. REAGAN SIGNED THE IMMIGRATION REFORM AND CONTROL ACT OF 1986 WHICH GRANTED A "ONE TIME" AMNESTY TO ILLEGALS WHO CAME FORTH AND APPLIED FOR LEGAL STATUS. THREE

MILLION ILLEGALS WERE ACCEPTED UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES THAT SUGGESTED WIDESPREAD FRAUD. IN RETURN FOR ITS AMNESTY THE GOVERNMENT HAD SPECIFIED, AND EXPECTED, THAT CONTROLS WOULD BE IMPOSED ON FUTURE ILLEGAL ENTRIES AND HIRING PRACTICES, BUT, ONCE THE AMNESTY TOOK PLACE, THE OPEN BORDER BACKERS IN CONGRESS SAW NO REASON TO FULFILL THEIR OBLIGATION. NO EFFORTS AT ENFORCEMENT WERE MADE AND THE “GRAND BARGAIN” BECAME A “GRAND HALF-BARGAIN”.

REAGAN’S AMNESTY OF 1986 REQUIRED APPROXIMATELY ANOTHER YEAR FOR ITS ORDERLY PROCESSING AND IMPLEMENTATION BY WHICH TIME HIS TERM IN OFFICE WAS FAST COMING TO AN END. HAVING OTHER ISSUES WITH THE CONGRESS, HE CHOSE NOT TO EXPEND POLITICAL CAPITAL ON IMMIGRATION. ADDITIONALLY, HIS MENTAL FACULTIES SHOWED EVIDENCE OF DECLINE AND HE PROBABLY BELIEVED THAT HIS “GRAND BARGAIN” WOULD WORK AND DELIVER ITS IMAGINED BENEFITS FOR YEARS TO COME.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE POLITICAL CAPITAL FACTOR WOULD TRACK DOWN THROUGH THE FOUR ADMINISTRATIONS THAT FOLLOWED REAGAN — BUSH I, CLINTON, BUSH II AND OBAMA. THE NATIONAL ARGUMENT OVER IMMIGRATION RAISED HIGH HOPES AND EMOTIONS AMONG THOSE WHO FAVORED AND OPPOSED IT, BUT WITH CONGRESS BECOMING INCREASINGLY DIVIDED AND DYSFUNCTIONAL, THERE WAS NO WILL NOR WAY TOWARDS CORRECTIVE LEGISLATION. THE ANSWER? DO NOTHING — DO NOT PASS A NEW LAW AND DO NOT ENFORCE THE EXISTING ONE. IN A NATION THAT OFTEN DEFINES ITSELF AS BOTH “A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS” AND A “NATION OF LAWS” OUR FAILURE TO ACT ON THE PRESSING PROBLEMS POSED BY OUR IMMIGRATION POLICIES OFFERS CLEAR PROOF OF OUR CAPACITY FOR SELF-CONTRADICTION AND FOR CULTURAL ABANDONMENT.

OUR HALF-CENTURY OF EXPANDED IMMIGRATION AND NEGLECTED ENFORCEMENT POLICIES HAS BEEN A STRONG CONTRIBUTOR TO THE STRESS FELT BY OUR MIDDLE CLASS. ITS INFLATION ADJUSTED WAGES HAVE REMAINED STAGNANT AS MILLIONS OF IMMIGRANTS HAVE SWELLED THE LABOR FORCE AND HAVE WORKED FOR LOWER WAGES OR “OFF THE BOOKS” PAYMENT, WHILE AT OUR HIGHER ECONOMIC LEVELS MORE OF THE WEALTH GENERATED BY OUR ECONOMY IS DIRECTED TO CORPORATE PURPOSES SUCH AS DIVIDENDS, SALARIES, BONUSES, STOCK BUY-BACKS, MERGERS/ACQUISITIONS, ETC.

AMERICA HAS ALWAYS HAD WINNERS AND LOSERS THAT PRODUCED AN ECONOMY OF LOWER, MIDDLE AND UPPER LEVELS, BUT, LOOKING BACK ONLY AS RECENTLY AS A CENTURY AGO, OUR MIDDLE CLASS, BASED ON ITS NUMBERS AND DOLLARS, ENJOYED GREATER WEALTH AND BETTER POLITICAL REPRESENTATION THAN IT HAS NOW. LATELY IT HAS BECOME STANDARD FORM IN CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGNS TO INVOKE THE INTERESTS OF THIS CLASS, BUT SUCH TALK IS BELIED BY LEGISLATION THAT FAVORS SPECIAL INTERESTS AND CONGRESSIONAL COMPENSATION, WHILE BLOWING AWAY THE MIDDLE CLASS’ ACCUMULATED SOCIAL SECURITY RETIREMENT CONTRIBUTIONS.

“...IT TRANSFORMED THE PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL EXPERIENCE OF BEING OVER 65 IN AMERICA.”

THIS PROGRAM, PASSED IN FDR’S SECOND TERM DURING THE GD, HAS PROVED ITSELF TO BE BOTH POPULAR AND EFFECTIVE. ITS MOST OBVIOUS ECONOMIC BENEFIT WAS THAT IT HELD, INVESTED AND THEN TRANSFERRED A SMALL PART OF OUR LABOR FORCE’S WAGES TO THE WORKERS’ RETIREMENT YEARS. THIS NEW SOURCE OF PURCHASING POWER FOR SENIORS BENEFITED BOTH OUR NATIONAL AND THEIR PERSONAL ECONOMIES, BUT, FAR MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT TRANSFORMED THE PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL EXPERIENCE OF BEING OVER 65 IN AMERICA.

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OUR SECOND MOST SIGNIFICANT FORM OF CULTURAL ABANDONMENT APPEARS IN OUR GOVERNMENTAL CULTURE, ITSELF. THIS HAS BEEN AN UNEVEN PROCESS SUBJECT TO PRESSURE FROM ALL THE FORCES WE LUMP TOGETHER UNDER THE LABEL OF “PROGRESS” — TECHNOLOGICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND POPULATION. LOOKING BACK OVER OUR 400 YEARS SINCE PLYMOUTH ROCK, WE CANNOT PROVIDE HERE A COMPLETE HISTORY, BUT CAN IDENTIFY KEY ELEMENTS IN HOW AND WHY WE ALLOWED OUR GOVERNMENT TO CUT ITSELF LOOSE FROM ITS CULTURAL MOORINGS.

IN OUR EARLY, 17TH CENTURY NEW ENGLAND MODEL COLONIAL GOVERNMENTS DERIVED UNITY FROM THE TIES BETWEEN THEIR CITIZENS’ RELIGIOUS AND CIVIC FUNCTIONS. HUMAN NATURE DOOMED THIS HARMONIOUS CO-EXISTENCE TO A BRIEF LIFE, BUT IT LEFT AN IMPRINT THAT SURVIVED IN SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS. OUR TRUE AMERICAN CULTURE DATES FROM OUR DI IN 1776 WHEN WE SEPARATED FROM ENGLAND AND BEGAN THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING OUR OWN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL IDENTITY. KNITTING THE THIRTEEN SEPARATE COLONIES TOGETHER INTO A FUNCTIONAL WHOLE WAS AN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TASK WHICH WAS ACCOMPLISHED AS MUCH BY THE FOUNDERS’ SENSE OF UNITY AND SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE AS THEIR POLITICAL ARGUMENTS

OUR 19TH CENTURY WESTWARD EXPANSION WAS A UNIQUE AND INSPIRING EXPERIENCE FOR THE FLEDGLING NATION, BUT ONE WHICH ALSO CORRUPTED ITS POLITICAL INNOCENCE AND PURITY. POLITICAL POWER WAS DEVELOPED IN THE SETTLER COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE OF THE STATE AND FEDERAL STRUCTURES FORMED ON THE EAST COAST AND THEN HAD TO BE PACKAGED AND TRANSFERRED TO NEW GROUPS IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING, FIRST, TERRITORIES AND, THEN, STATES.

WITH THE CLOSING OF OUR WESTERN FRONTIER, THE ENERGY APPLIED TO EXPANDING OUR NATIONAL STATUS WAS REDIRECTED TO CREATING A GLOBAL IDENTITY. IN THE 20TH CENTURY THE SIZE, OPPORTUNITY AND, RESPONSIBILITY OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT ALL INCREASED GREATLY, BUT THE GROWTH OF ITS SIZE SEEMED TO TAKE PLACE WITHOUT REAL PLANNING OR CONTROL. WE DEVELOPED A BUREAUCRACY THAT REPRODUCED ITSELF LIKE CELLS IN A PETRI DISH WITH CONGRESS PROVIDING NUTRIENTS IN THE FORM OF BOTH MONEY AND LEGISLATION.

THE RESULT IS TODAY’S MASSIVE MIX OF AGENCIES, DEPARTMENTS, AUTHORITIES, BUREAUS, DISTRICTS, ADMINISTRATIONS AND MORE. HOWEVER NAMED, THEY COMPRISE A SYSTEM THAT IS BLOATED, INEFFICIENT, CORRUPT, OFTEN IMPENETRABLE (THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION) AND SEEMINGLY

RESISTANT TO REFORM EFFORTS.

ALL PEOPLE CHANGE AND THEIR GOVERNMENTS CHANGE WITH THEM. WE LACK THE STRENGTH TO RESIST TECHNOLOGY IN ITS LARGER AND EVEN ITS LESSER FORMS, AND WE LACK THE VISION OF HISTORY’S ASSESSMENT OF THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE. IN MANY WAYS OUR PAST AND PRESENT GOVERNMENTAL CULTURES ARE NOT COMPATIBLE, BUT THERE ARE OTHERS THAT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO STAND THE TEST OF TIME. THESE INCLUDE OUR GOVERNMENT’S TONE, OUR BASIC VALUES, OUR CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES. THESE ARE WHAT BIND OUR PEOPLE, INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNMENT TOGETHER, AND AT THIS TIME THEIR TIES ARE FRAYING.

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AND THERE IS A THIRD AND VITAL AREA OF OUR NATIONAL CULTURE IN WHICH WE HAVE DISCARDED OUR HISTORIC CHRONICLE IN FAVOR OF VERSIONS THAT FOLLOW THE LEFTIST POLITICAL CURRENTS OF THOUGHT THAT CROSSED THE ATLANTIC FROM EUROPE AND GAINED FOLLOWERS AND TRACTION DURING THE PAINFUL YEARS OF OUR GD.

THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY ORIGINS OF THE RISE OF MARXIST IDEOLOGY IN RUSSIA AND THEN EUROPE, AND ITS BLOODY STRUGGLE AGAINST FASCISM FOR CONTROL OF THAT CONTINENT’S ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLITICAL ACTION, IS A SPELL-BINDING TALE IN ITSELF WHICH WE CANNOT DESCRIBE IN DETAIL HERE, BUT HIGHLIGHTS OF WHICH WE CAN INCLUDE IN A FOLLOWING CHAPTER OF THIS SERIES.

THE DISCONTENT AND THE FINANCIAL AND HUMAN DISLOCATION CAUSED BY THE GD CREATED HERE MANY OF THE SAME CONDITIONS THAT PLAGUED EUROPE WITH THE RESULT THAT SEEDS OF SOCIALIST/COMMUNIST IDEOLOGIES WERE ACCEPTED AT FIRST IN SMALL NUMBERS IN OUR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, GERMINATED THERE AND THEN IN THE POSTWAR YEARS SPREAD TO THE WIDER POPULATION.

“...THE ELEVATION OF POLITICAL CONCEPTS/GOALS SUCH AS INCLUSIVITY AND RACISM TO ACADEMIC PRIMACY.”

THE TARGETING OF OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM BY THE PREWAR MARXIST LEADERS WHO CAME HERE HAS TURNED OUT TO BE FAR MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN THEY MIGHT HAVE IMAGINED, FOR IT SET US ON A PATH TO FORSAKE OUR HISTORIC EDUCATIONAL CULTURE IN FAVOR OF LEFTIST THOUGHT THAT TILTED IN FAVOR OF OTHER CULTURES AND DENIGRATED OURS. BY FAILING TO DEFEND THE LATTER WE LEFT OURSELVES OPEN TARGETS TO THE HYPERCRITICISM OF OUR INSTITUTIONS THAT HAS BECOME COMMON IN ACADEMIA AND TO THE ELEVATION OF POLITICAL CONCEPTS/GOALS SUCH AS INCLUSIVITY AND RACISM TO ACADEMIC PRIMACY.

IT IS NO EXAGGERATION TO STATE THAT THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN LEFTIST, OR ANY OTHER, POLITICAL THOUGHT SYSTEM AND OUR EDUCATIONAL HERITAGE POSES A CRISIS FOR OUR WCIV MODEL OF THE ACADEMY. BUT CRISIS IT IS — NOT BECAUSE OF

WHAT OUR PAST EDUCATIONAL CULTURE OFFERED, BUT BECAUSE OF WHAT OUR PRESENT BIASED MODEL WILL IMPOSE UPON THOSE WHO SUCCEED US.

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THESE THREE — OUR ECONOMIC, GOVERNMENTAL AND EDUCATIONAL — CULTURAL RELINQUISHMENTS ARE THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL AND BASIC OF THOSE WE WILL DESCRIBE IN THIS SERIES. THERE ARE OTHERS WHOSE TIME AND PLACE ARE MORE RECENT AND HAVE BEEN MUCH IN OUR HEADLINES. THEY CARRY STRANDS OF THE SAME CULTURAL DNA AS THE THREE WE HAVE INTRODUCED HERE, BUT LACK THEIR LONGEVITY. IN THE END, OUR MOST IMPORTANT TASK IS TO UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR CULTURE AND OUR IDENTITY, TO RECOGNIZE WHY WE ABANDONED WHAT WE DID AND WHY WE ACCEPT WHAT HAS REPLACED IT.

THESE ARE NOT EASY QUESTIONS AND THERE ARE NO EASY ANSWERS, ESPECIALLY IN A SOCIETY AS INCREASINGLY DIVIDED BY ITS MOTIVES AND GOALS AS OURS. IT WAS DIFFICULT ENOUGH WHEN WE SHARED A VISION OF OUR NATIONAL PURPOSE; WITHOUT IT, IT WILL BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE.

AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT TRUMP

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,

IT HAS NOW BEEN ALMOST THREE MONTHS SINCE YOUR INAUGURATION, A PERIOD OFTEN REFERRED TO AS “THE FIRST HUNDRED DAYS” OR “THE HONEYMOON”. AS IT CONCLUDES AROUND THE TIME OF OUR APRIL ISSUE, WE DECIDED TO DEPART SOMEWHAT FROM OUR NORMAL FORMAT AND OFFER SOME COMMENTS WHICH WE HOPE WILL PROVE HELPFUL AS YOU MOVE FURTHER INTO YOUR PRESIDENCY.

ALREADY, ENORMOUS CHANGE HAS TAKEN PLACE AND CONFRONTS YOU DAILY, THE MOST EVIDENT BEING THAT YOU ARE NO LONGER “THE DONALD”. YOU ARE “THE PRESIDENT” — NOT JUST FOR YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY OR YOUR PARTY, BUT FOR ALL AMERICANS WHICH INCLUDES THOSE WHO VOTED FOR YOU AND THOSE WHO DIDN’T, THOSE WHO LIKE, APPROVE AND SUPPORT YOU AND THOSE WHO DON’T AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY FROM YOUR AND THE NATION’S PERSPECTIVE, THOSE WHO MAY VOTE FOR YOU IN THE FUTURE AND THOSE WHO MAY NOT.

THESE LAST NUMBERS OF POTENTIAL VOTERS ARE NOT AS FIXED AS WERE THOSE OF PAST ELECTIONS THEY ARE FLUID AND CAN CHANGE SIGNIFICANTLY DUE TO FACTORS BOTH WITHIN AND BEYOND THE MANY AND VARIED CONTROLS OF OUR GOVERNMENTAL PROCESS.

YOU WERE ELECTED, AND PREVAILED IN THE GOP NOMINATING CAMPAIGN, BECAUSE YOU RIGHTFULLY IDENTIFIED AND APPEALED TO A DEEP LEVEL OF CONCERN AMONG VOTERS OVER AN ACCUMULATION OF VALUES AND POLICIES THAT THEY FELT HAD BEEN IMPOSED WITHOUT THEIR CONSENT AND WHICH, IF CONTINUED, THEY SAW AS IRREPARABLY CHANGING AMERICA’S CHARACTER AND CULTURE.

“IT IS AT ONCE HUMBLING AND ENERGIZING,
OVERPOWERING AND CHALLENGING.”

OF THE SEVENTEEN GOP CANDIDATES AND THE HALF DOZEN OR SO DEMOCRATS WHO APPEARED ON STAGE FOR THE NOMINATING “DEBATES” YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE WHO TAPPED INTO THE MOST EMOTIONAL ISSUES OF THE NOMINATING AND ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS. WE OFFER YOU OUR HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS. BUT THE CAMPAIGN HAS ENDED; YOU ARE NOW AT THE CENTER OF OUR ONGOING POLITICAL CONTROVERSY, AND YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF THE VAST POWER AND APPARATUS OF OUR GOVERNMENT’S EXECUTIVE BRANCH. TO NO ONE ELSE IN OUR COUNTRY IS THIS POWER TO GOVERN GIVEN. IT IS AT ONCE HUMBLING AND ENERGIZING, OVERPOWERING AND CHALLENGING.

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OVER THE PAST HALF CENTURY, WE HAVE ALLOWED OUR POLITICAL (AS WELL AS OUR PHYSICAL) INFRASTRUCTURE TO DETERIORATE TO THE POINT WHERE THE FUNCTIONS OF ALL THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT ARE THREATENED AND, IF WE ARE TO CONTINUE AS THE CONSTITUTIONAL REPUBLIC OF OUR PAST, COURSE CORRECTIONS MUST BE MADE. WE THINK YOU HAVE SENSED THIS AND CAN BE THE AGENT OF CHANGE NOW CALLED FOR BY MANY OF OUR PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS.

WITH THIS OPPORTUNITY, HOWEVER, COMES A WARNING. YOU HAVE TRADED THE WORLD OF COMMERCE FOR THE POLITICAL ARENA IN WHICH POWER AND STYLE ARE JOINED AND USED DIFFERENTLY THAN IN YOUR PAST. THAT WORDS ARE WEAPONS IS ENDLESSLY TRUE IN POLITICS; AND THEY CAN BE REPEATED, WHETHER REASONABLY OR NOT, OVER LONG PERIODS WHENEVER THE SPEAKER WISHES.

GIVEN OUR POLITICIANS’ ADDICTION TO PUBLIC APPEARANCES AND COMMENTS AND THE ROLE OUR MAINSTREAM MEDIA (MSM) PLAYS IN EDITING AND PRESENTING THEM, THESE TWO ELEMENTS, POLITICS AND MEDIA, ARE SO TIGHTLY JOINED, SOMETIMES EVEN INSEPARABLY, THAT STYLE AND SUBSTANCE BECOME CONFUSED.

OUR MSM IS PROBABLY THE LARGEST AND MOST POWERFUL SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE COUNTRY. IT HAS AMASSED TREMENDOUS WEALTH AND THROUGH ITS VARIOUS FORMS, ESPECIALLY BROADCAST, CONTROLS WHAT THE PUBLIC HEARS AND SEES AT ANY TIME OF DAY OR NIGHT. IT CAN EDIT AT WILL AND CAN DETERMINE THE LENGTH, THE ATTITUDE AND THE CONTENT OF WHATEVER MATERIAL IT CHOOSES TO PRESENT.

BY VARIOUS FORMS OF FINANCIAL AND STRUCTURAL CONSOLIDATION UNDERTAKEN IN THE GENERATION FOLLOWING WW II, OUR MOSTLY FAMILY OWNED AND INDEPENDENT PRINT/ BROADCAST MEDIA WERE TRANSFORMED INTO OUR PRESENT MEGA-

MEDIA ESTABLISHMENT OF A FEW VERY LARGE CORPORATIONS.

YOU HAVE FOUND YOUR EFFORTS AND POLICIES OPPOSED BY OUR MEDIA AND HAVE RESPONDED WITH STRONG CRITICISM WHICH WE HOPE YOU WILL FIND REASON TO EXPRESS DIFFERENTLY IN THE FUTURE. FOR INSTANCE, INSTEAD OF REFERRING TO OUR MSM AS “THE ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE”, YOU MIGHT PREFER TO CITE ITS EXTENSIVE LIBERAL POLITICAL BIAS AND ITS CONTROL OVER CONSUMER CONTENT, THEREBY AVOIDING EMOTIONAL COUNTER ATTACKS FROM YOUR OPPONENTS. FOR INSTANCE, DEMOCRATS WOULD BE CHALLENGED TO FASHION SUCH A RESPONSE WITHOUT DENYING OR DETRACTING FROM THEIR PRIMARY SUPPORT BASE.

WE OFFER THIS SUGGESTION BECAUSE IT SEEMS TO OFFER TWO ADVANTAGES. THE FIRST IS THAT, ALTHOUGH YOU MAY VIEW THE MEDIA AS “THE ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE”, MOST OF “THE PEOPLE” SPEND MANY HOURS A DAY WATCHING TV OR LISTENING TO THE RADIO. THAT DEGREE OF CONTACT AND ABSORPTION LEADS TO A BONDING/IDENTIFICATION PROCESS NOT EASILY DISPLACED, AS HEAVY VIEWERS SEE THEMSELVES AS HAVING HOPED FOR, OR EVEN REAL, RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE IMAGES THE MSM SENDS INTO THEIR CARS, BUSINESSES, HOMES AND PUBLIC SPACES.

THIS OUTSIZE ROLE THAT THE MSM HAS COME TO PLAY IN OUR SOCIETY AND OUR LIVES IS MOVING US IN DIRECTIONS THAT WILL LESSEN THE INDEPENDENCE OF OUR INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES, BUT IT IS ONE OF RECOGNIZABLE BIAS AND IS BETTER LABELLED AND DEALT WITH AS SUCH.

ANOTHER NEGATIVE FOR “ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE” IS THAT IT WAS AN ACCUSATION MADE IN VARIOUS FORMS BY HITLER AND STALIN AND DIRECTED AGAINST THOSE WHO OPPOSED THEIR AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES AND, WHETHER CONSCIOUS OR SUB-CONSCIOUS, IT IS A CONNOTATION BEST NOT RECALLED.

THE SECOND REASON WE OFFER FOR TONING DOWN YOUR RESPONSE TO CRITICISM IS THAT YOUR WORDS CAN BE RECALLED, ACTIVATED AND REQUOTED AT ANY TIME. THIS MEANS THAT YOUR CHOICE OF WORDS CAN SERVE YOU INITIALLY, BUT LATER THEY BECOME A CHOICE OF WEAPONS FOR YOUR OPPONENTS — ALWAYS AVAILABLE IN QUOTE FORM WITHOUT EDITING AND OVER THE USE OF WHICH YOU NO LONGER HAVE CONTROL. THAT’S PART OF POLITICS AND HAS ALWAYS BEEN SO. WORDS, LIKE SWORDS, CAN HAVE DOUBLE EDGES.

IN YOUR FORMER LIFE, MR. PRESIDENT, YOU WROTE IN THE ART OF THE DEAL ABOUT THE TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES OF COMMERCIAL NEGOTIATIONS WHEREBY, AFTER STATING YOUR OPENING POSITION, YOU WAIT AND MANIPULATE YOUR COMPETITOR USING INFO YOU KEEP TO YOURSELF. LIKewise, IN THE PRESIDENCY, YOU ARE IN THE WHITE HOUSE WHERE YOUR OPPONENTS WOULD LIKE TO BE. THIS IS AN ENORMOUS ADVANTAGE, AND YOU DO NOT HAVE TO REACT TO EVERY STATEMENT, FOR BY DENYING RECOGNITION YOU SHRINK YOUR OPPOSITION AND BY RESPONDING YOU PROVIDE IT WITH AMMUNITION. YOU ARE THE PRESIDENT AND HAVE THE POWER. WE HOPE YOU WILL USE IT MORE QUIETLY, SPARINGLY AND EFFICIENTLY. IN THE OVAL OFFICE “LESS IS MORE” AND WHEN, HOW OR WHETHER YOU SPEAK CAN CONTROL EVENTS. TIT-FOR-TAT REACTIONS ONLY BENEFIT YOUR DETRACTORS AND WILL BE TURNED AGAINST YOU AND WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE.

THIS IS THE BOOMERANG ASPECT OF POLITICS NAMED AFTER THE AUSTRALIAN WEAPON THAT, WHEN HURLED SKYWARD, EMPLOYS

THE LAWS OF AERODYNAMICS TO REACH ITS LIMIT AND THEN IN A SWEEPING ARC TO RETURN TO THE THROWER. SO ALSO WITH POLITICAL RHETORIC WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN MUCH LONGER LIFE BY OUR INSTANT COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY. ANY STATEMENT, ACCUSATION OR REFERENCE IS IMMEDIATELY RETRIEVABLE AND, WITH OR WITHOUT EDITING OR COMMENT, REUSED FOR ITS ORIGINAL, OR SOME NEW, PURPOSE.

WE FELT THAT THE LAST ELECTION WAS CRUCIAL BECAUSE, HAD SECTY. CLINTON BEEN ELECTED AND SERVED ONE OR TWO TERMS, THE CONTINUOUS AND INCREASING MOVE TO THE POLITICAL LEFT MIGHT WELL HAVE BEEN MORE THAN OUR WEAKENED AND DYSFUNCTIONAL SYSTEM COULD ENDURE.

THIS BRINGS UP ANOTHER ASPECT OF YOUR PRESIDENCY. MOST PEOPLE VIEW OUR CONGRESSIONAL DYSFUNCTION AS ONLY BEING A FAILURE TO PASS NEEDED LEGISLATION. IT IS THAT, OF COURSE, BUT IT ALSO GOES FAR DEEPER. CONGRESS' ABANDONMENT OF ITS ROLE AS A KEY AND EQUAL BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT EMBOLDENED PRES. OBAMA'S UNCONSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION OF EXECUTIVE POWER.

THE STABILITY OF OUR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC HAS ALWAYS DEPENDED UPON MAINTAINING THE ORDER AND POSITIONS OF OUR THREE BRANCHES. LACKING, AS WE DO TODAY, A STRONG POLITICAL CENTER, THE VACUUM THERE WILL BE SUBJECT TO REPEATED ATTACKS AND ASSERTIONS OF CONTROL BY THE INCREASINGLY POWERFUL AND EXTREME ELEMENTS OF BOTH THE RIGHT AND THE LEFT. SADLY, IN OUR GOVERNMENT'S PRESENT, UNPROTECTED STATE OF DYSFUNCTION, IT MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND OR SURVIVE THEIR IRRESPONSIBLE VIEW AND USE OF POLITICAL POWER.

“YOUR PRESIDENCY COULD CLAIM NO GREATER SUCCESS THAN RESTORING IT.”

YOU HAVE CALLED, WITH REAL SUCCESS, TO “MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN”. IT IS OUR HOPE THAT NOT ONLY WILL YOU BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE ECONOMIC AND MILITARY DIRECTIONS YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED, BUT THAT ALSO YOU WILL MAKE OUR COUNTRY AND ITS GOVERNMENT SAFE FROM THE SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS AND DERELICTIONS THAT OFFEND OUR PAST AND THREATEN OUR FUTURE. A RATIONAL CENTER HAS PLAYED AN ESSENTIAL PART IN THE COURSE OF AMERICAN POLITICS. YOUR PRESIDENCY COULD CLAIM NO GREATER SUCCESS THAN RESTORING IT.

WE DO NOT AGREE WITH ALL THE CHANGES YOU HAVE MADE, BUT SUPPORT MANY OTHERS AND ARE THANKFUL YOU ARE IN THE WHITE HOUSE AND ARE BEGINNING TO UNDERTAKE THE CORRECTIVE MEASURES NECESSARY IN HEALTHCARE, IMMIGRATION, TRADE, DEBT REDUCTION, THE MILITARY AND ATTACKING THE MENTALITY AND METHODS OF OUR BLOATED BUREAUCRACY.

WE WISH YOU SUCCESS IN ALL OF THESE AREAS, BUT PLEASE DO NOT DISREGARD OUR WORDS OF CAUTION IN YOUR COMMUNICATIONS. THE 2018 CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS ARE LESS THAN TWO YEARS IN THE FUTURE AFTER WHICH THE

PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATING EFFORTS WILL BEGIN. THE DEMOCRATS ARE PRESENTLY IN CONSIDERABLE DISARRAY, SO MUCH SO THAT THEIR FUTURE CHANCES CAN ONLY IMPROVE. WE BELIEVE, AS YOU DO, THAT THEIR MESSAGE OF CONTINUING CORRUPTION, SPENDING, OPEN BORDERS AND GOVERNMENT OF THE ELITES, BY THE ELITES AND FOR THE ELITES WILL NOT SUCCEED, BUT POLITICAL EVENTS, TIMETABLES AND LANGUAGE CAN CHANGE AND CREATE MOMENTUM INSTANTLY.

LASTLY, THE PRESIDENCY IS AN INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE. EACH NEW OCCUPANT BRINGS EXPERIENCE, SKILLS AND ATTITUDES TO IT THAT DERIVE FROM HIS UNIQUE COURSE OF LIFE; IN RETURN FOR WHICH THE POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE OFFICE IMPRINT AND MOLD OUR PRESIDENTS THROUGHOUT THEIR TERMS.

YOU BRING A BACKGROUND TO THE WHITE HOUSE UNLIKE ANY OTHER IN OUR HISTORY. THIS MAY ALTER THE INTERACTION BETWEEN YOU AND THE OFFICE, BUT IT WILL NOT OVERPOWER IT. WE SUSPECT THAT THE OPPORTUNITY EXISTS FOR AN UNUSUALLY POSITIVE REACTION TO TAKE PLACE IN WHICH BOTH YOUR AND YOUR PRESIDENCY'S CAPABILITIES WILL BE ENLARGED.

GIVEN THE MULTIPLE DEMANDS AND OFTEN FRENZIED PACE OF A DAY IN THE WHITE HOUSE, IT MAY BE DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO FIND TIME FOR REFLECTION, BUT A FEW SOLITARY MOMENTS AT NIGHT OR EARLY IN THE MORNING MIGHT PROVIDE THE QUIET SPACE FOR YOU AND YOUR OFFICE TO INTERACT MOST EFFECTIVELY.

SOLITUDE WILL NEVER BE COMPLETE IN THE OVAL OFFICE, AS YOU SHARE IT WITH YOUR PREDECESSORS. REGARDLESS OF THEIR POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OR PERSONAL CHARACTER THEY HAVE ALL CONTRIBUTED, AS YOU WILL, TO OUR NATION'S DESTINY. WE THINK YOUR ELECTION AT THIS POLITICAL MOMENT OFFERS AN UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE NEEDED CHANGES AND TO RETURN OUR GOVERNMENT AND PRESIDENCY TO FUNCTIONING AS THEY WERE INTENDED. WE WISH YOU WELL IN THESE EFFORTS AND HOPE THAT YOUR ACTIONS WILL RESOLVE THE MANY PRESSING PROBLEMS THAT OUR GOVERNMENT MUST FACE AFTER A HALF-CENTURY OF NEGLECT.

IN CLOSING, WE USE THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS CORPS SIGN-OFF “THANK YOU, MR. PRESIDENT”

WITH EVERY GOOD WISH,

LATE BREAKING NEWS

THE DEFEAT OF THE GOP HEALTHCARE BILL IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (HR) IS A TEXTBOOK ILLUSTRATION OF HOW DYSFUNCTIONAL OUR CONGRESS HAS BECOME; FOR, EVEN GIVEN ITS TOTAL OPPOSITION BY DEMOCRATS, THIS SHOWCASE PIECE OF LEGISLATION WAS BILLED BY REPUBLICANS AS TOP PRIORITY FOR THE LAST SEVEN YEARS AND FACED A VOTE IN THE HR WHERE THE GOP HELD A MAJORITY CONSIDERED COMFORTABLE FOR MOST MATTERS.

WITHOUT THE NECESSARY VOTES FOR PASSAGE, SPEAKER RYAN PULLED THE BILL THEREBY ENDING, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, ANY MEANINGFUL REVISION OF OBAMACARE AND, THE POSSIBILITY OF AN IMPROVED HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCE FOR MILLIONS OF AMERICANS. THIS STUNNING FAILURE WAS NOT BROUGHT ABOUT BY A DEMOCRATIC VOTE MAJORITY, BUT BY INTERNAL DIVISIONS BETWEEN MODERATE AND CONSERVATIVE FACTIONS WITHIN THE GOP OVER IDEOLOGICAL SHADINGS AND LIMITS. IN ADDITION TO HEALTHCARE'S CLAIM TO SIGNATURE STATUS DURING YEARS OF CONGRESSIONAL AND CAMPAIGN RHETORIC AND A DETERMINED PUSH FOR APPROVAL IN THE HR BY THE PRESIDENT AND SPEAKER RYAN, THE GOP MEMBERS OF THE HR COULD NOT COME TOGETHER.

ALL PARTIES HARBOR DIVISIONS. CERTAINLY THE DEMOCRATS DO, BUT THEY SEEM TO BE ABLE TO CONTAIN, IF NOT RESOLVE, THEM SO THAT INTERNAL DIFFERENCES DO NOT THREATEN THE PASSAGE OF IMPORTANT LEGISLATION IN EITHER CHAMBER.

THIS IS A MAJOR LOSS FOR THE GOP FOR SEVERAL REASONS. THE FIRST IS THAT OF HEALTHCARE'S "DAY ONE REPEAL AND REPLACE" STATUS NOT BEING ABLE TO OBTAIN APPROVAL IN A CONGRESS WHERE REPUBLICANS HELD MAJORITIES IN BOTH CHAMBERS. REGARDLESS OF INTRAPARTY IDEOLOGY DIFFERENCES, WHAT MESSAGE WILL VOTERS TAKE FROM THIS EMBARRASSING LEGISLATIVE EFFORT ?

THE GOP IS EQUALLY AS DIVIDED OVER THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE AS IT WAS OVER THE RECENT BILL. SOME MEMBERS HAVE PREDICTED THAT THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT (OBAMACARE) WILL SOON COLLAPSE UNDER THE WEIGHT OF ITS OWN ERRORS AND INCONSISTENCIES AND WILL THEN BE REPLACED BY NEW LEGISLATION PROPOSED BY REPUBLICANS AND SUPPORTED BY SOME DEMS. OTHERS IN OUR PRESENT CONGRESS HAVE CLAIMED THAT THE MOMENT FOR HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION HAS PASSED AND THE COUNTRY IS STUCK WITH THE STRUCTURES AND REGULATIONS OF THE CURRENT LAW.

SO MUCH FOR THE LEGISLATIVE ISSUE; THERE IS A LARGER ONE WHICH WILL BE HARD TO MEASURE, BUT CANNOT BE DISMISSED. IT IS THAT OF TRUST. IN THE LAST ELECTION, REPUBLICANS WERE ABLE TO GAIN CONTROL OF THE PRESIDENCY AND BOTH CHAMBERS OF CONGRESS BY CITING DEMOCRATIC FAILURE OF POLICY AND GOVERNMENT AND BY PROMISING BROAD CHANGES IN BOTH. THE FAILURE OF THE GOP HEALTHCARE EFFORT CANNOT HELP BUT RAISE VOTER DOUBTS AS TO WHETHER THE SUCCESS OF OTHER CAMPAIGN PROMISES AND DIRECTIONS MIGHT ALSO BE COMPROMISED.

IF THE 2020 ELECTION IS SIMILAR IN ITS INTENSITY TO 2016 AND ITS COMPETITION FOR THE INDEPENDENT VOTE, BROKEN PROMISES AND FADING DREAMS COULD PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART. BUT, WE WILL NOT HAVE TO WAIT FOR FOUR YEARS, AS THE MID-TERM CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS ARE LESS THAN TWO YEARS AHEAD. IN THESE, EVERY SEAT IN THE HR AND ONE-THIRD OF THOSE IN THE SENATE WILL BE CONTESTED. WE MUST WATCH CLOSELY, TAKE NOTHING FOR GRANTED AND TRY OUR BEST TO READ BETWEEN THE LINES.

AN EARLY START?

IT'S POSSIBLE THAT A SEEMINGLY UNRELATED AND UNIMPORTANT EVENT LAST MONTH COULD SIGNAL THE FIRST STEP IN OUR 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. WE REFER TO A PRESS CONFERENCE ARRANGED TO PROMOTE THE SALE OF FORMER PRES. GEORGE W. BUSH'S BOOK DEVOTED TO PORTRAITS HE HAS PAINTED AND HIS ENJOYMENT OF THIS RECENT AVOCATION.

THERE WERE NO HARD QUESTIONS, ONLY LOBS; AND THE SMIRK OF HIS PRESIDENTIAL YEARS HAS BEEN REPLACED BY A WARM CHUCKLE AND "PALSY" ATMOSPHERE, SHARPLY DIFFERENT IN TONE THAN THOSE DURING HIS TWO ADMINISTRATIONS.

"W" 'S RECORD WAS A WEIGHT THAT HUNG HEAVILY AND UNCOMFORTABLY ON BROTHER JEB'S EFFORTS TO OBTAIN THE GOP NOMINATION. WITH THE PASSAGE OF BOTH TIME AND MEMORY, JEB MIGHT WELL THINK IT USEFUL TO DO A MAKEOVER ON "W". JEB RAISED OVER \$100 MILLION FOR HIS 2016 ATTEMPT AND MAY STILL HAVE SOME "WALKING AROUND" MONEY IN HIS CAMPAIGN ACCOUNT. THERE IS NO REASON TO THINK THAT HE WOULD NOT WANT TO TRY AGAIN; NOR THAT HE COULD NOT AGAIN RAISE CAMPAIGN-SCALE AMOUNTS OF MONEY. THE WILL IS THERE; WILL THERE BE A WAY ? AND, JUST IN CASE, AN IMPROVED IMAGE OF HIS BROTHER COULD BE HELPFUL. CYNICAL ? PERHAPS, BUT THIS IS POLITICS. JUST A THOUGHT.

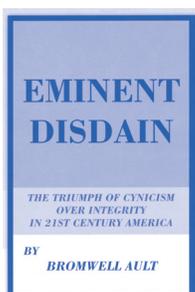


ECD 3/28/17

END NOTES

¹WEBSTER'S NEW UNIVERSAL UNABRIDGED DICTIONARY, 1996, BARNES AND NOBLE BOOKS, NYC, NY

²FERNAND BRAUDEL, A HISTORY OF CIVILIZATIONS, TRANSLATED BY RICHARD MAYNE, PENGUIN BOOKS, 1993, NYC, NC



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